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FEAR

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: PO Box 20, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB ☐ Typetting Terriose Shell Press, Ludlow, and by Apple Macintosh Computers Systems Christopher Ian
Quibb Colour Origination Scan Studios, Islington, London Printed in England by Pulman Web Offset, Watling Street, Blochley, Midlum Keynes MK2 2BP - a member of the BPC Colour Distribution COMAG, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex
COMPETITION RULES: The Editor's decision is final in all matters relating to publication and while we alter prizes in good faith believing them to be suitable if something unforeseen happens we reserve the right to substitute prizes of comparable value. We do not carry any in-depth prizes or prizes as possible when the published closing date. Winners names will appear in a later issue of FEAR. No correspondence can be entered into regarding the competition. Entries cannot be returned. Prizes will be awarded to the winner. No prize will be awarded to anyone who works for either Newsdata or any of the companies whose prizes they enter one of our competitions.
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FEAR (Incorporating Movie and The Movie-Makers)
ISSN No. 0954-8017

COVER DESIGN & ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVER FREY

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TOASTING NEW TALENT

Thank hell for small mercies! Sometimes you can change attitudes if you're persistent and know you are right

We've been going for nigh on one and a half years and, for most of that time, **FEAR** has published fiction by newcomers to the field and amateurs who show promise. Not a month goes by, however, without someone complaining that we're wasting pages with short stories by people who do not have show-stopping names

Admittedly, big name fiction can sell copies, and I think we've provided our fair share of this throughout our run. For a magazine such as **FEAR**, which has such a short history when compared to the now defunct American giant *Twilight Zone* and Britain's SF stalwart *Interzone*, the list of major names is, I would venture, fairly impressive. We've had Ramsey Campbell, Shaun Hutsen, Stephen King, Brian Lumley, Stephens Gallagher and Laws, Ian Watson, Jonathan Carroll, Guy N Smith, Graham Masterton and Christopher Fowler, to mention just a few.

We'd obviously like to include more named fiction but we do not have the advantage of being a no-budget fanzine and we've never been offered anything on a platter. We - quite rightly - have to pay a going rate and that imposes some limit on the fiction that even we can publish.

So much for the division between the fan- and pro-zine/ mass consumer markets. Fortunately, we have the favour of big name writers, for which I thank them, and, during the next few months we shall be putting out a high quality batch of stories and novel extracts from US writers and Brits.

But what happens to the newcomers who have one or two stories published in **FEAR** and are then left to develop their own literary careers? Few of them will make the bestseller lists but many

have, during the past year, had successful sales to magazines both in the UK and America.

To continue our support for this valiant breed, we intend to introduce two new features to the **FEAR** universe. The first is a regular look at the twists and turns in the careers of newcomers who have written for us, detailing their latest sales and, hopefully, helping the editors of major publishing companies who we know read **FEAR**, to get a perspective on the material that comes through our doors.

The second feature is rather mega, and involves the opinions of all you readers out there who aren't into writing short or even novella-length tales. Come on, there must be some, surely? After lengthy discussion amongst the higher publishing echelons at Newsfield, we've decided to introduce an award for best short story of the year. Anyone can vote when the time comes and, to be fair, we'll create two categories, one for new authors and one for established writers who have had their work published in **FEAR**.

To be fair to all the writers who have contributed to **FEAR** since its inception, the first poll will be extended to include all stories published since the magazine threw off its nappies. If the award proves popular it will, of course, become a regular annual event.

The **FEAR** award will be launched soon. We also hope that our further endeavours to showcase future literary horror/fantasy/SF talent will bring in yet another avalanche of story submissions. We've had over one thousand during the last year and our Prime Evil Short Story Competition is already causing the editorial offices to fill up with manuscripts. All this effort means that we shall continue our literary push into 1990 and, the way things are now looking for **FEAR**, well beyond.

Happy New Decade!

John Galt

Sometimes you can change attitudes if you're persistent and know you are right!"

DRAWING OF

THE NIGHTBREED PORTFOLIO BY RALPH MCQUARRIE

Special thanks to Stephen Jones who arranged this gallery.



N THE DARK



Here are some of the scenes and images you will see in Clive Barker's *Nightbreed* movie which opens early in 1990. Other magazines have decided to run them with interviews, reproduce them in black and white or shrink them so that nobody can appreciate their true bestial beauty. We've decided to do things differently and that will mark our approach to *Nightbreed* in the coming months, up to the premiere and afterwards.

Ralph McQuarrie, the concept artist on *Nightbreed*, is best known for his breathtaking hightech vehicle designs in the *Star Wars* movie. McQuarrie started out studying technical illustration at the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles and began work in 1950 as an illustrator for the Boeing Company. After deciding that he did not want to be an ad artist, he switched direction and subsequently broke into the movies. In 1976 he was hired by director George Lucas to design a couple of robots for his upcoming movie, *Star Wars*. Lucas wanted two androids to provide comic relief in his science fantasy film. McQuarrie designed See Threepio and Artoo Detoo and the rest, as they say, is history.

McQuarrie admits that *Nightbreed* posed a challenge, forcing him away from the sleek, linear





drawings of machinery to the curves and broken lines of the beasts and ancient objects littering Midian's Necropolis. During the three week enhancement shoot at the end of principal photography, he and Barker frequently worked a seven day week and McQuarrie had to visualise new creatures, design matte paintings to add depth, texture and panorama to scenes already caught by the camera, and paint a huge eight foot mural to illustrate the history of the Breed. Although initially stunned by Clive's vision and worried that he might not fit in with the production, McQuarrie now confidently describes himself as 'The Nightbreed artist'.



COMING SOON: The Nightbreed Interviews



BLOCH OF PROSE

Splatterpunk and slasher films debase the art of true horror, says Robert Bloch, author of the classic *Psycho*. He talks to FEAR's Stanley Wiater.



proper introduction to Robert Bloch would require a book length work. (In fact, there are two Bloch studies available, both written by critic Randall D. Larson. Robert Bloch deals extensively with his writings while *The Complete Robert Bloch* is a 126-page illustrated bibliography exhaustively detailing his multimedia success in print, film, television and radio during the past fifty years).

Bloch was born on April 5, 1917 in Chicago and was an adolescent when he made his first magazine sales to the now legendary pulp *Weird Tales*. He was for a time a correspondent of no less than one of the all-time masters of the

PSYCHO (US, 1960) was greeted with snooty disdains by most critics on its release, but met with phenomenal commercial success and went on to achieve subsequent cult status. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock and starring Anthony Perkins, Janet Leigh, Vera Miles and John Gavin, this black comedy/exploitation horror movie opened the floodgates to a deluge of inferior rip-offs.

The plot of the original concerns Marion Crane, who absconds with \$40,000 from the company at which she is working. En route to join her lover, she stops for the night at a motel where she is brutally murdered, apparently by the motel-keeper's aged mother. The script of PSYCHO is terse and grimly witty and the film is innovatively shot and brilliantly edited. It is one of the first films for which the exhibitor, by contract, guaranteed to refuse admission after projection had begun; self-evidently, this was a calculated risk which paid dividends.

LES DIABOLIQUES (aka THE FEMINS in Britain or DIABOLIQUE in the US) was made in France in 1954 and is a highly influential and much-copied example of the horror/thriller genre. French director Henri-Georges Clouzot brought his pessimistic vision and technical brilliance to bear on the tale of two women, Nicole and Christine, who conspire to murder Christine's sadistic husband. They dump his body in the swimming pool of the stabbily and unpleasant school where he is headmaster; but, by the next day, the corpse has disappeared, and they are haunted by signs of his presence. The film stars Simone Signoret, Vera Clouzot and Paul Mourisse.

"The Romans started with simple chariot races and ended up trying to devise extreme and atrocious methods of torture and mass murder. I don't regard this as an improvement"

macabre, H.P. Lovecraft (Bloch and Lovecraft even wrote stories in which they each created unspeakably dire fates for fictionalised versions of one another). Bloch, however, came into his own in the Forties and Fifties with such classics as *The Scarf*, *The Kidnapper* and *The Will to Kill* which established him as one of the first writers to explore the field of psychological horror and dark suspense. The central philosophy of this form of horror is that the worst monsters are not from beyond the grave or another dimension, but from whatever lurks within our own fragile minds.

Robert Bloch is, of course, best known for a novel called *Psycho* (1959) which was later made into the classic motion picture by director Alfred Hitchcock. Beyond the immediate recognition *Psycho* has given him, Bloch has penned no less than fifty books and more than four hundred short stories. He has written for such classic television series as *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and *Thriller* and is author of several screenplays, most notably a series of anthology films produced in England – *Asylum*, *The Day That Dripped Blood* – which he adapted from his own short stories.

Bloch is one of the legends of the genre whose work has had an enormous influence on an entire generation of writers; and, although he has been a professional writer for more than half a century, he shows no signs of slowing down. Every year heralds the publication of a new novel (*Lori*) or short story collection (*Fear and Loathing*), while his earlier work is being brought back into print by publishers such as Underwood-Miller (*Screams: Three Novels of Suspense, The Selected Stories of Robert Bloch*) who realise that much of what is now considered to be 'contemporary' was in fact written by Bloch decades ago.

So, without further hesitation, let's nip back the shower curtain and meet the original Robert Bloch.

LABEL CANNED

SW: Considering that you've scripted your share of movies, what do you think of the recent trend in openly sadistic 'splatter' films?

RB: I don't care for this particular trend because I feel it does a disservice to the field. It's very much analogous to the use of four letter words in contemporary fiction. These things are now buzz words; they've lost their impact. They're a substantive device for actual thought, and the same thing is true in a horror film visually.

Anyone can eviscerate – or seem to eviscerate – on camera. It doesn't call for any skill or any imagination. You might as well just go to a slaughterhouse and pick out a few animals and carve them up screaming and squealing – on camera – and the audience that is

there for the sadistic effects will be just as pleased! The blood is spurting, the screams are coming – if that's what they want, they can have it. But this has nothing to do with the art or even the craft of the presentation of the fantastic, or the genuine horror film.

SW: Then what are your thoughts on the new wave in fiction, usually termed – though I find in just – as Splatterpunk, where every clinical detail of the violence is described so that the supposedly jaded reader has no other choice but to face it head-on?

RB: To me, Splatterpunk is merely a new label for the mixture as before. I don't believe it is a writer's mission to cater to the tastes – or lack of taste – of the supposedly jaded reader. I don't believe writers of horror fiction are engaged in a contest to see who can most nauseate these jaded readers, or present the most graphically disgusting descriptions. The Romans started with simple chariot races and ended up trying to devise extreme and atrocious methods of torture and mass murder. I don't regard this as an improvement.

SW: Yet critic Sam Moskowitz once described you as one of the first to 'tell it like it is' in your psychological horror stories. In terms of realism, just how explicit do you allow yourself to be for the sake of the story?

RB: I try to do what Hitchcock did in his films. I will suggest and, in effect, cut away – as he would do with a camera, but in this case verbally – and let the rest be imagined by the audience and/or reader. I think it's much more effective than just to do a graphic, detailed description which is the equivalent of showing graphic violence on the screen. That's always been my technique.

DIABOLIQUE

SW: It's an easy parallel to state that, while crime and violence in our society are escalating, the popularity of Horror has also never been greater. Is this popularity of the genre a cause or effect of the already existing troubles in our society?

RB: I think it is symptomatic of a social disease – not a venereal disease but a sociological disease – but we are talking about the so-called 'horror' films: the R-rated films, the X-rated films, the splatter films, the snuff pictures, that sort of thing. As I've said, I think these films don't make any sort of meaningful contribution whatsoever to society. But they do pander to the sadists. I've enjoyed very few films lately, to be perfectly blunt about it. There are many script assignments I would turn down because I wanted no part in this particular trend. To me, the ideal film in this genre is *Diabolique*.

I used to get some very strange looks when, twenty years ago, I would talk about the really silent films, particularly silent comedies.

Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd and a few others. And people would say, 'Ah, I saw them; they're no good!' Most of these people didn't even know the names of the comedians. Since that time, there's been this enormous interest in retrospectives. And not only have these films been shown, but they've been shown properly. Not in little 8mm grainy prints, but in 35mm on the wide screen with an organ accompanist. Those films bring the house down! They're just as good today – that comedy is timeless. And it's genuine. It doesn't consist of a lot of car smashings and vulgarities and noise and screaming matches.

These are just genuine, well-structured comedies which build – just the way a horror-suspense film should build – to get a reaction from the audience. Now, that's the analogy I make. I think the good horror films – the old ones, when shown properly – are just as effective as they were originally. Even though, as in the case of the comedy films, the visual elements have been nipped-off and excerpted and just plain, outright stolen by some of the brilliant young 'geniuses' now directing. And, for an audience who never saw the originals, they think this is just fine – fresh, original and new. But it isn't.

EVIL EXPLOITED

SW: Have others in effect 'stolen' from you films or novels?

RB: I've been told that there must be at least forty variations on *Psycho*. And a couple who are not familiar with the original film – or the novel – find this all very innovative. But I think everything, to a certain degree, is developed from a writer's readings and associations with other work. It's just a matter of degree whether it constitutes a point of departure or inspiration, or just plagiarism.

SW: Many writers believe in the age-old theory of catharsis; that to exercise our darker nature through the arts, we can then better cope in life. Do you still hold to that belief?

RB: Yes, but again we have to make that distinction of what I consider to be horror, and what the exploitation filmmakers consider to be horror. In the types which exhibit a certain restraint, I think there is this catharsis that does come from within, because it's built up from within. It isn't shoved in one's face, a blood pie instead of a custard pie, the way it's done in so many of these other films. In that case, you're not achieving catharsis – you're merely catering to voyeurism. Sadistic voyeurism. But the basic premise which I always try to stress is that it isn't so much what's shown, but the attitude toward it.

If the evil is condoned, or presented in an amoral fashion by those who would recoil in disgust from the use of the word 'evil', and then they walk away from it, I think

it's quite a different story. But if the attitude is there, and you take a moral position, then I think it's a positive and constructive thing. But the anti-hero, the man or woman whose most atrocious activities are condoned because he or she is 'avenging' something, establishes a very dangerous premise. And it ultimately leads to the Ku Klux Klan, the Inquisition, you name it.

SW: But in terms of so-called 'moral responsibility', isn't it always the artist who is ultimately blamed when someone commits a horrendous crime? One in which the criminal claims he was 'inspired' by the novel or the film, otherwise he might not have committed the crime?

RB: I merely refer them to the work in question. If they can find in any of my writings a weirdo with whom it would be pleasant to identify, then I would stand condemned. But I don't believe, for example, that anybody who has read *Psycho* or seen the film is inspired to dress up in drag, grab a butcher knife and head for the nearest shower stall! Because Norman Bates is not presented as a happy human being, or a fulfilled human being. There are no rewards for the Norman Bates's of this world in my work. And I don't think there ever will be. There are times when such a person goes unpunished, in the legal sense of the term, but we always know that he or she is a most unhappy person, and much more miserable than any one of the victims.

That's my position and always has been and, I guess, always will be. I believe that there's more genuine morality in that approach than there is in any number of pieces of fiction - whether in print or in film - where the anti-hero is presented as being justified simply because he's handsome and macho, and allowed to get away with these things.

FUNNY BONES

SW: Do you consider that as part of the legacy of your work, that you always instilled a moral viewpoint into your characters?

RB: Oh, actually I'm only trying to please an audience, or a certain segment of an audience. I don't think I'm writing for posterity, or that there's any particular survival value in what I do. So I don't approach it in that pretentious a fashion; it's just a personal viewpoint. I don't sit down to try and write a moral homily, but I do believe every writer should have an attitude.

When you just present something without a point of view, you're copping out. As a writer, as a creative individual, you just might as well do a documentary! You've contributed nothing; what you are doing is a fictional report of an atrocity that's meaningless unless you take a position. That position is certainly taken by the

press in its reporting. We've yet to see the headlines that say, 'Hooray! Twelve More Crimes Committed Today' or 'Wow! What An Axe Murder!' It's a subtle distinction, but it's there.

SW: What warnings would you give someone who feels it's their destiny to become a writer?

RB: My first warning would be to stop believing in destiny. My second warning would be to opt for a less demanding profession. Writing is a lonely occupation, exposing one to constant rejection, criticism and (if one is successful) to jealousy and the malice of the envious. It is, in addition, quite arduous, and it takes its toll in stress. There are also accompanying perils to consider. If you don't watch out, you can end up giving interviews.

SW: One of the trademarks of your style is the way you so successfully meld humour with the horror.

Why do you repeatedly use humour in the most macabre and grisly situations?

RB: Humour and horror both invoke a reaction by means of shock and/or surprise. Both make effective use of the same element - the unexpected. I use either in order to startle the reader; I find this helps keep him awake.

THE MOVIE PEOPLE

SW: What do you consider to be your most important novel and short story?

RB: Important to who, and in what way? Financially, to me, I suppose *Psycho* would fit the description, since it has had so long a shelf life. In terms of personal effect, my short story, *The Movie People* reassured me that I could deal with romance and sentiment without relying on rue or glee.

Psychologically, my most important effort would be my recently completed autobiography. I prepared for writing it all my life! As to what other people might consider important - if anything - you'll have to ask them.

SW: *Psycho* is so closely identified with you that almost every time you're named in print it's as Robert (Psycho) Bloch. To what extent has that one novel helped - or hurt - your career?

RB: Its effects on my career are obvious. It helped give me a label, a means of quick identification. At the same time it has probably hindered my efforts to move into other areas of writing; readers (and editors and producers) expect and/or insist on the type of story with which they associate me. Lately - in my novels, *Lori* and forthcoming *Psycho House* - I've injected more humour and more sociological commentary, without diminishing the shock and suspense. It will be interesting to see how this works: thus far the reaction to *Lori* has been enthusiastic, and I'd imagine that *Psycho House* may please old Norman's fans as well.

When the original *Psycho* was first published, I'd already had a professional writing career which extended back almost twenty-five years. On that basis, it seems logical to assume I'd probably have continued as a professional writer without any problem: I'd also been invited to do television work a good six months before the film ever appeared, so that too would very likely have been part of my subsequent career. But *Psycho* did fix my image, for better or worse. For years afterward, many young ladies refused to take showers with me.

NO BLOCKS

SW: You're undeniably prolific; have you ever encountered a 'dry spell' in your career?

RB: No, I've never had a dry period, and I trust I won't. I've been doing it for fifty-five years, and I'll do it another fifty-five years, God willing.

SW: After a substantial career as a dark dreamer, what gives you the most satisfaction? Or are you rarely ever satisfied?

RB: My satisfaction depends on the satisfaction of the reader. Not all readers. I do not yearn for the admiration of the yahoo audience, nor do I court it. On a personal level, I am more satisfied with my recent efforts because I think they'll be more satisfying to my readers. Both of them.

SW: Based on your experiences, have you developed a ready-to-deliver, twenty-five words or less, Statement On Horror And Its Future?

RB: Hmm. Now that's a toughie. I've never tried to arrive at a definition of it. You know, in science fiction there's that famous quote from Damon Knight who, as a critic, says, 'Science Fiction is where I happen to be pointing at the moment.' But, unfortunately I think, if I had to point my finger at where Horror is at the moment, I would point at the audience...



"Psycho did fix my image, for better or worse. For years afterward, many young ladies refused to take showers with me"





At least seven major film adaptations of Stephen King's work have belly-flopped onto the big screen since producer Richard P. Rubinstein met the bestselling author in 1979.

Since that meeting, they have teamed up on two fairly successful *Creepshow* anthology movies but, until last year, had not collaborated on a faithful adaptation of a King book. Indeed, critics ignored *Carrie*, *Stand By Me* and *The Dead Zone*, and predicted, prematurely that Rubinstein would never have a box office hit. Then *Pet Sematary* came along and changed all that by reaching the number one spot at the US box office and holding it for nearly ten weeks.

King and Rubinstein took almost ten years before the release of *Pet Sematary* to perfect their act.

The introduction was made by Warner Brothers at the point that they were considering doing 'Salem's Lot as a theatrical feature. 'George Romero and I had made *Martin*, which is about a vampire in a small town, and 'Salem's Lot is about a vampire in a small town. Warners asked us if we'd be interested in doing it, we said yes, they introduced us to Steve who said, 'Great', and then Warners decided to do it for television and we decided we didn't want to do that.

'That's how I met Steve, and at that point I acquired the rights to *The Stand*. We felt that we needed a starter project to get the relationship off the ground, and that *The Stand* was a very big book to do and likely to be expensive, and Steve came up with the idea for *Creepshow*.'

While most people believed that

Stephen King was essentially a novelist, Rubinstein put his faith in King's screenwriting talents.

'Steve is an avid viewer of movies, he's extremely bright. Certainly in any craft you need to have some experience in order to refine your skills, so Steve's screenwriting has continued to improve and *Pet Sematary* is a prime example of that.'

CREATIVE CONTROL

Rubinstein acquired the rights to *Pet Sematary* in 1985 but only after King had laid down some strict creative ground rules. 'I promised Steve that I would make the picture in Maine. The adaptations of his books had a history of not being shot in Maine. In fact Steve used to comment, semi-facetiously, that whenever he saw one of his adaptations the ocean was always on the wrong side of the screen. They were made on the West Coast rather than on the East Coast.



THE STAND ... AT LAST?



The novels of Stephen King, pictured left in *Pet Semetary*, have not always translated happily to the big screen. However, Richard P Rubinstein, President of US film production company Laurel Entertainment, is determined to make chart-topping films out of King novels. And, as he tells John Gilbert, commercial success need not necessarily entail a betrayal of the source material.

'I also promised Steve that I would look for the financing for the movie and try to find someone who agreed with me that his screenplay ought to be shot with no changes. The third factor was that I wanted to find a director who would be enthusiastic about it. And, fourthly, we wanted to find a business arrangement that had some dignity attached to it. We weren't willing to give up on the business arrangements in order to get the creative control.'

Rubinstein talked with distributors for four tough years before finding a home for *Pet Semetary* at Paramount. Many companies were worried about the movie's content and did not want to be associated with it, despite the pull of Stephen King's name. 'I had been to Paramount more than once with the project, and the last time prior to this the Head of Production was seven months pregnant and she had a very negative reaction to it.'

Fortunately, when she left, Rubinstein went to the new Head of Production who agreed to do the movie but said: 'This is not material that I'm particularly familiar with. I would just put a fence around the house and keep the kid in.'

The company finally agreed to all Rubinstein's stipulations on creative freedom and even acceded that the director (Mary Lambert) could be someone who was not necessarily known in the horror genre, but who would be sympathetic to the project. 'I saw *Siesta*, which commercially was not very successful, but I thought that Mary's sensibilities were offbeat enough and perverse enough in a certain fashion to make it an interesting match up with *Pet Semetary*.'

'We looked at Mary's music videos and took an educated guess that Steve and Mary would get along, and I was the one responsible for putting them in a room together when they initially

started talking about Bosch paintings. Then I knew that I was off in the right direction.'

By deciding to make the picture in Maine, Rubinstein ensured that King's advice could be sought without too much of a problem (he has a fear of flying). 'Steve regards himself as a mechanic who's available if one needs to fix a line or two. He did not spend every day on the set, he did not spend every minute talking to Mary, but once or twice a week he would come round and certainly give everybody an emotional boost.'

FLIP FLOP

One of the most astonishing aspects of *Pet Semetary* is the involvement of Mike Hughes, a two year old boy who plays the part of Cage Creed, the little boy who tears his way out of his grave in an Indian burial ground and comes back to kill his mother. 'There were a lot of people over the history of



Stephen King with Mary Lambert and Richard P. Rubinstein (right) in Maine during the filming of *Pet Semetary*

"We're big enough to have some clout in the industry, but small enough not to lose sight of the personal aspects of what we're doing"

this project that wanted me and Steve to make the child older, because it would have been easier in production with an older child. For us, the fact that this child was meant to be so young was, in fact, what increased the terror and the impact, so that, by making the kid older, we would maybe have had something easier but we would have lost the soul of the picture. Again, that's one of those things we said no to. Over the four years, I could come up with another half-a-dozen things that people wanted us to do that we didn't want to do.

'This is exactly the movie that we set out to make four years ago. We took a sufficient period of time for it because we didn't want to be heroes for the business deal in the short term and bums in the long term for making another adaptation of a Steve King book that was not satisfying to his book audience or the people that like Steve's material as movies.'

Rubinstein's expert nose for horror goes back to his first meeting with director George Romero when both men had just started their careers. 'I was first introduced to George Romero by a foreign sales agent by the name of Irvin Shapiro, who has now passed away, but Irvin was representing George and I started working for Irvin nationally in foreign sales, coming out of a background of corporate finance

'George and I hit it off; basically I regarded him as 70 per cent the creative being and 25 per cent business, and I was the flip flop of that. So as a producer/director team we made a very good match.

'For me the genres are an acquired taste. I met some very talented people over the course of my career - and some of that is happenstance - who gave me a certain kind of education as to what aspects of the genre were important and which were less

important. Over the years I've gained a sensitivity to the material. I had an affection for it that was not inbred as a child when I was sitting and reading EC comicbooks, although Jack Kamen, who was one of the EC artists from the Fifties happened to be my dad's best friend. While I grew up, although I wasn't aware of it, I was on Jack Kamen's knee while he was drawing a lot of EC comics for the Fifties. And I didn't appreciate it then!'

FIRST BLOOD

Rubinstein split with Romero four years ago by mutual, friendly agreement. 'I wanted to do for a number of people what I had been doing for George as a way of building a business and a way of satisfying myself by having more than one project at a time to work on. And George wanted to write and direct his movies and not have any corporate responsibilities. So, more amicably than most people I know who have had a twelve-year partnership and who decide to split up, we went off separately. I then began to produce television programmes - the *Tales From the Darkside* - which were a mechanism for me, not from a business standpoint to build a company, but a chance to build a whole new set of creative relationships.

'Out of ninety episodes of *Tales From the Darkside*, the television series, we used thirty-six different directors of which twenty-six were first time directors. It was a way for Laurel as a company to spread out and go beyond the single creative source that George was when he and I were working together. And George moving out of the centre stage allowed a lot of new talent to start flourishing.

'That's how I came to meet Michael McDowell, who had never written a screenplay or a teleplay

before and got his initial experience writing for *Darkside*, then went on to write *Battlestar*. He's come back and worked for Laurel as the primary screenwriter for *Tales From the Darkside: The Movie*.'

Laurel is set up to support writers, such as novelists, who have not necessarily handled the screenplay form before. 'Steve [King] was regarded as a novelist and Laurel helped Steve turn a corner as a screenwriter. As part of the *Tales From the Darkside* television series, Steve wrote his first original teleplay, called *Sorry, Right Number*; Michael McDowell did the same and, as part of the *Monsters* television series, we've just produced David Morrell's first teleplay - David wrote *First Blood* and *Brotherhood of the Rose*.

'We're again trying to carve a custom shop, a niche, working with talented people, where the environment in which they work is extremely important. We're big enough to have some clout in the industry, but small enough not to lose sight of the personal aspects of what we're doing.'

STAND AND DELIVER

As Jason Voorhees and Freddy Krueger, the stock horror images of the late Eighties, appear to be waning in popularity, directors such as William Friedkin, with *The Guardian*, and William Blatty, with *Exorcist* 1990, appear to be spearheading horror movies for the next decade. Rubinstein believes that a rebirth of the grand traditions of horror is gaining momentum. 'I like to think of *Pet Semetary*. In the tradition of *The Exorcist* or *Rosemary's Baby*, as a more dramatic horror film where the characters are more important, when they get into trouble you care about it.

'People give the genre short shrift, where their knee jerk

reaction is, 'Oh, who cares about character in a horror movie.' In fact, character is more important because you have less time to tell why someone is the way they are. You need really good acting to bring that to an audience in a relevant and short period of time, particularly when you're dealing with a fantasy film.'

The long-awaited movie adaptation of King's magnum opus, *The Stand*, would be just such a movie and, after years of

screenplay that Rospo had delivered encompasses those half-a-dozen scenes that people who I know love the book are going to expect to see in the movie.

The success of an adaptation is not measured by literal translation, but I know that if some people were not to see that scene in the tunnel, with Larry and Rita, they would be very disappointed. I also want to see Trashy light up those oil tanks because that's the way you meet him in the book.'



Feverman, from the US series *Monsters*, some episodes of which are available on video sell-through

speculative talk, the project is at last getting into gear. 'We recently received a first draft screenplay from Rospo Pallenberg. I've had the benefit of reading it but I have not talked to Steve or Warner Brothers, who are my two partners in *The Stand*, about their reactions to it.

'I was particularly gratified by it because I believe that Rospo has solved the most thorny problem, which is what do you keep in and what do you leave out in adapting an 820-page novel for the screen.

'I took an informal litmus test among some friends who know the book well and said, 'Look, what five or six scenes would you feel cheated of if you didn't see them in the movie? I found that the

The movie will encompass the events detailed in the original novel, not in the expanded book which is due in print next year. 'It's scheduled for publication in April in the States. This is the unexpurgated version where Steve has put back the 400 pages that Doubleday asked him to take out when the book was published. It's tough enough to deal with 800 pages, in terms of translating it into a two-and-a-half hour movie. A lot of the 400 pages deals with the story that comes ahead of the gas station scene which opens the original book.

'I have had the 1200 pages in manuscript form for well over a year and have purposely not read them because I didn't want to

confuse my thinking. I wanted to keep it as clean and linear as I possibly could.'

OPEN DOORS

Before *The Stand* goes into production, however, Laurel have several other projects on the go, including another Stephen King movie 'Tales From the Darkside: The Movie' will be the next film that will be released in terms of feature films. Laurel is continuing to develop material with different writers, some of it outside the genre.

'In television we've got a show called *Future Stuff*, which is an information show about all those products that are going to become available in the next ten years. If you think back, the products that were future stuff in 1980 were the VCR, remote controls, the microwave oven... We're going to be looking at those kinds of products that are going to be coming out in the Nineties, that we expect will have similar social impact.

'I have also just recently made an arrangement with Steve to produce *Thinner*, with Michael McDowell to write the screenplay. We think that it is a wonderful story and that Michael is going to flesh out the book. It's a wonderful story in terms of two cultures, the establishment in the States and this very wealthy attorney, and the gypsy culture which contrasts with that.

'We are also going to do *The Nightflyer*, which is in the anthology *Prime Evil*, for television. It could be very well done for television.'

King at last appears to have a creative/business partnership that can turn the failure of his material at the box office into success, and Rubinstein is keen to continue the collaboration. 'I've found over the years that not only have I got great pleasure from Steve's material but a producer/writer partnership has allowed us both a more expansive control over what we're doing.

'Steve used to be cut off from the production process when he sold the book. But when we're working as partners I got the benefit of Steve's gift of words and his ongoing involvement from a creative standpoint. I've never regarded myself as the creative core. I really want to be the one, as the producer, who gets the right people in the room and locks the door.

'I love those people who daydream in the bathtub while I make my lists. I appreciate that what makes them good at what they do is not necessarily the same set of skills that makes me a good producer. So together we get more out of the system than we do individually.

"People give the genre short shrift, where their knee jerk reaction is, 'Oh, who cares about character in a horror movie'"





THE NIGHTMARE THAT NEVER WAS

As England awaits the release of *A Nightmare on Elm Street 5: The Dream Child*, Craig Spector tells Mark Salisbury about the script collaboration that was fated never to make it.

Freddy doesn't like it, and its director has disowned it. We're talking *A Nightmare on Elm Street 5: The Dream Child* here. Keenly anticipated by

Freddy fans, the latest instalment of the Elm Street saga promised to be a better than average sequel. New Line announced that they were putting the script out to tender and asked several of the genre's leading scribes to come up with a way of continuing Freddy's dynasty. Splatterpunk John Skipp and Craig Spector won the toss. We celebrated; they toiled long and hard. Then, all of a sudden, the script no longer read 'screenplay by John Skipp and Craig Spector.' Hollywood strikes again.

FEAR decided to get the lowdown on Skipp and Spector's adventures on Elm Street. So, while the duo were over on a sabbatical during the filming of Clive Barker's *Nightbreed*, we went straight to the horses'—ie Craig Spector's—mouth to find out how they would have done Freddy their way.

MS: How would you describe the experience of working on *Nightmare 5*?

CS: More 'adventures in Hollywood' [laughs]. It was filling a tall order: I mean you're

doing the next Freddy film and there's not a lot of leeway there because pretty much the whole company (New Line) is riding on it—on the continued success of Freddy. So you do tend to run into a lot more cooks in the kitchen. But that's Hollywood, and you have to take that into account and not be offended by that because it's simply the way the game functions.

MS: What had you planned for Freddy in the film?

"We wanted to take Freddy out of high school . . . what we really wanted to do was to make him as scary and disturbing as he is truly capable of being"

CS: We wanted to take him out of high school. We wanted to give him a chance to move on to the next stage of development, to push him forwards as a character who would appeal to a slightly older group of viewers and simultaneously to extend him back in time and fill in some of the blanks in his history. In a way, what we really wanted to do was to make him as scary and disturbing as he is truly capable of being. While Freddy is sitting there quipping and zipping,

about and being the trans-dimensional poseur that he is, we tend to forget that the guy was a child murderer, and very likely a child molester. We wanted to get into the real psychology of that kind of thing, and from that point, extend it into a supernatural context, because that was where we thought the real power of the thing lay

DREAM POOL

MS: Didn't you have the rape of the one hundred maniacs?

CS: Yeah, that was the first thing. The first thing we did in our version of the Freddy script was to show Amanda being raped by the one hundred maniacs, then we had Alice seeing that in the Dream Pool—which was essentially the place where all dreams meet, a sort of Nightmare on Elm Street access to the collective unconscious—and so we had Alice coming into contact with Amanda down in the Dream Pool and witnessing the rape of the one hundred maniacs. And the next two things we did in the walking world were to bulldoze Freddy's house to make room for the new Elm Street shopping mall [laughs] and we went to high school graduation where everybody was getting out of school. Then we were able to approach the whole nightmare concept of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* from another dimension—essentially the nightmare based on the dreams of your life, the

feeling that you are going to fail, or the feeling that you don't know what's ahead of you and, in essence, have just left the womb and are entering into the infancy of adulthood.

MS: Your version was subtitled *The Dream Pool*, wasn't it?

CS: At first it was *The Dream Pool*, but by the time we were finished, the perspective of the entire script had changed, and so we renamed it *The Dream Child*.

MS: Has it proved a useful experience?

"We learned a lot about how Hollywood works and why Hollywood works"

CS: It was fascinating. It was a tremendous learning experience. We learned a lot about how Hollywood works and why Hollywood works. We met a lot of good people and made good contacts, but I think, certainly in some circumstances, it was constrictive to simple creativity. However, ultimately it doesn't really matter because it puts people who like us in contact with us. These people want to see more of our work and actually want to see more of the things we do that can be less constrictive.

STRAIGHT FOR THE JUGULAR PART TWO

Just how do you transfer a film to comic book or vice versa? As Clive Barker tells FEAR's Brigid Cherry in the concluding part of our foray into his comic book worlds — it ain't easy.

"Comics are not like movies, despite the fact that it is consistently claimed that the spirit of a comic is a movie on the page"



live Barker's success in so many media has now extended to the realm of comics.

Comics, of course, are extremely visual; their main, and occasionally only, impact is

through the images. The pictures, then, are extremely important to the successful transition of Barker's work to the comic book format. Some of the best contemporary comics' artists have been brought in to work as illustrators on *Tapping the Vein*, *Hellraiser* and *Nightbreed*, bringing to life Barker's extremely individual and often idiosyncratic worlds.

It's hard to predict how successful such material will be in making the transfer to the comic medium. As with any translation of written material into visual form, the reader has their own idea of how something will look and is often resistant to an artist's vision. At least, with Barker overseeing every stage of the work, we can be sure it will conform to his vision, and the selection of artists should ensure that each story has a unique look to it.

To inaugurate the *Tapping the Vein* series, for example, Barker chose Craig Russell, who has admirably transferred *Human*

Remains. Normally responsible for adaptations of opera, and literary works by authors like Rudyard Kipling, Russell has taken to horror Barker-style with ease. The clean, simple lines of his artwork leave room for the imagination, and the shadowy twilight-world the hero inhabits is perfectly captured.

By its very nature, the illustration of a literary work such as *Tapping the Vein* has to be wordy, but the often large amounts of text are skilfully incorporated into the page. *Hellraiser*, as a collection of stories written specifically for the comic, and *Nightbreed*, as an adaptation of the film, both make for easier transition. Bernie Wrightson, famous for *Swamp Thing*, is working on the first issue of *Hellraiser*, 'the thought that Bernie is doing a story excites me,' says Barker.

Other contributors include established and respected artists such as Dave McKean, Klaus Janson, Stan Woch, John Bolton (who has illustrated *In the Halls of the Cities*, pictured here) and Scott Hampton.

Hampton was not only a favourite of Barker's, he also had the pick of the stories in *Tapping the Vein*. He chose *Pig Blood Blues* for its unique atmosphere – particularly suited to his melancholy, yet vivid, style which has previously been seen in *Silverhorns* and *Pigeons From Hell*.

MOVING ON

Barker's text, taken from *The Books of Blood* almost verbatim, didn't make it any easier for the artists. If anything, the difficulty lay in interpreting such precise descriptive prose; but Barker is satisfied with the creative process. 'Artists and editors knew what we wanted to achieve to make a state-of-the-art horror comic. It's darker and more persuasive than the traditional horror comics.'

In making his work available in the medium of comics, Barker has struck on a good marketing ploy. He can reach a new audience of comic book readers and his current fans are going to be seeing a new angle on his work. 'When I made *Hellraiser* I received a lot of fan mail from people that had been led to the books by the movie. It is possible that people will be led – I hope they are – to the books from the comics. They're not mutually exclusive experiences.'

HALF AN EYE

Comics have, undoubtedly, had an influence on Barker's life, if not his work. 'I like comics immensely, I've always collected them. Once I thought I'd grown out of them and didn't need my *Fantastic Fours* or *Green Lanterns* and sold them all. About a year later, I felt this terrible absence in my life. I'd lost a favourite dog, and started to re-collect them. I've done that twice

now.'

'I'm still a huge fan of the *Daredevil*, whose adventures have been at a peak for a long time. I like *Akira* at the moment. I get everything from Marvel, which enables me to have an informed judgement on comics. One of the things I've realised is how much stuff Marvel produces that I haven't even picked up on. I still reverentially pick up *Heavy Metal*, although I don't enjoy them as much as I used to. And I still pick up the other titles I used to read when I widely read superhero comics. I used to read the *Incredible Hulk*. I don't like them as much as I used to, but still buy them for sentimental reasons. I read them because I used to read them. I pick up a pretty wide range. I get *Japanese Manga* – I'm not absolutely sure what's going on. I read a lot of stuff with only half an eye.'

Despite his own equivocal feelings, he has no doubt as to the place of comics in contemporary mass media. 'Comics should be a popular medium, although I do enjoy the high art end of the comic market as well. The great thing about the state-of-the-art stuff is that it's available relatively cheaply and in large quantities.'

One of the greatest difficulties in the transfer of any product from one medium to another is the loss of impact of the original form. This is very apparent when comics are transferred to the screen, and similar difficulties arise when making the transfer in the other direction. Barker is very aware of this problem: 'A comic strip is a series of moments of arrested time, a movie is a continuum, although on celluloid it is a series of moments of arrested time which we experience as a continuum. So there are very fundamental differences in the narrative. You can go back over the page you just read in a comic strip. Unless you're watching on video, you can't go back over a film. The time frame is directed by the pace of the movie. You can pace yourself as you go through a comic book just as you can a novel or a short story.'

SINGLE NOTE

'Comics are not like movies, despite the fact that it is consistently claimed that the spirit of a comic is a movie on the page. For one thing the image is static, for another the image doesn't operate in time. It works the other way about, too. The term 'comic strip moviemaking' is thrown around with monotonous regularity. *Mad Max* is supposed to be a comic strip movie. I don't think that is true. I defy anybody to show me the comic strip equivalent of *Mad Max*. *Mad Max* is absolutely and centrally a piece of cinema. I cannot see how it would work as a comic strip. How do you get speed, how do you get the fast cut? You just can't do it. It's a different art.'

'People who cross-categorise

film and comics mean something which is perilously close to a perjorative. They view comic strip characters as shallow, therefore if a film character is a single note or cardboard character they are 'comic strip' characters. This is condescending both to movies and to comic strip.'

'When they talk about a comic strip being like a movie, what they mean is that there are pastiches of certain styles. For instance, early *Steranko* film noir style comic strip. But that's not the same as it being like a movie. In principle, you could put that style on T-shirts, it's nothing to do with it being comic strip. The whole analysis doesn't stand close scrutiny, the closer you look at it the more it doesn't seem to work.'

All this does not bode well for *Nightbreed*, the first issues of which are an adaptation of the film. Barker recognises this. 'What I think happens if you make the transfer law is that you end up with something which doesn't have any of the strengths of film and all its weaknesses. A 90-minute movie is not supposed to transfer into a 20-page comic. There's something different going on in the rhythm of the pictures.'

'Sophisticated comic strips do things that you could never do in a movie. There's a synthesis of images, there's the way that the frames are put side by side, there's the way that the segue from one sequence to another works, there's the very fast cutting that happens all the way through, there's the splash page.'

'It sounds as though writers John Wagner and Alan Grant and artist Jim Baikie have to live up to a great deal of responsibility.'

The result of Barker's involvement with these comic books could be seen as the emblazonment of his name on a product for seemingly little effort. It could look as though he is cashing in on his own success, spreading his name too thin, and possibly heading for a backlash and public rejection. Then, this doesn't worry him: 'I'm like the Marx brothers, rushing all over everywhere making a lot of noise – flashy bastard, basically.'

So – what's next – a rock opera? 'I've recently been approached by two people wanting to make operas of two of my pieces. I'd like to think that if there were ever to be an opera of one of my fictions it would be very different from the comic strip version which in turn would be very different from the page.' Move over *Carrie* and *Phantom*, here comes *Jacqueline Ess*.

"I'm like the Marx brothers, rushing all over everywhere making a lot of noise – flashy bastard, basically"



FEAR'S FILM CHOICE - THE



PSYCHO

Despite the universal appeal and multi-media success of the horror film, it is still to this day derided and/or condemned by many critics. So, although horror films have been around since the cinema itself began, general acceptance of the genre is a long time in coming.

In order to illustrate how significant an impact the horror film has had on the history of cinema, FEAR has compiled a list of its top sixty horror movies, drawing on the opinions of around forty contributors - including

journalists, film and television personalities, authors, filmmakers and artists - who all share a passion in common: a love of the horror genre. They are not afraid to admit it - neither should you be.

People's preferences alter daily, and any preference is, by definition, subjective. However, I believe that this list provides a guide to those films whose importance within the genre is without question. We have organised the films in descending order of merit; you may not agree, in fact you most probably won't, and, if you feel we have done a disservice to any of your favourites, I am sure you will write and tell us.

The final result is a mixture of the obvious (*The Exorcist*, *Halloween*, *Texas Chainsaw*

TOP SIXTY HORROR

- 1 **PSYCHO** (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)
- 2 **THE THING** (John Carpenter, 1982)
- 3 **THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE** (Tobe Hooper, 1974)
- 4 **THE EXORCIST** (William Friedkin, 1973)
- 5 **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD** (George A Romero, 1968)
- 6 **PEEPING TOM** (Michael Powell, 1960)
- 7 **NIGHT OF THE DEMON** (Jacques Tourneur, 1957)
- 8 **ALIEN** (Ridley Scott, 1979)
- 9 **ROSEMARY'S BABY** (Roman Polanski, 1965)
- 10 **SUSPIRA** (Dario Argento, 1977)
- 11 **THE HAUNTING** (Robert Wise, 1963)
- 12 **VIDEODROME** (David Cronenberg, 1983)
- 13 **WITCHFINDER GENERAL** (Michael Reeves, 1968)
- 14 **CARRIE** (Brian De Palma, 1976)
- 15 **DAWN OF THE DEAD** (George A Romero, 1979)
- 16 **BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN** (James Whale, 1935)
- 17 **HALLOWEEN** (John Carpenter, 1978)
- 18 **THE EVIL DEAD** (Sam Raimi, 1983)
- 19 **KING KONG** (Merian C Cooper, Ernest Shoedsack, 1933)
- 20 **DEAD RINGERS** (David Cronenberg, 1988)
- 21 **INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS** (Don Siegel, 1956)
- 22 **DRACULA** (Terence Fisher, 1958)
- 23 **A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET** (Wes Craven, 1985)
- 24 **HELLRAISER** (Clive Barker, 1987)
- 25 **THE HOWLING** (Joe Dante, 1981)
- 26 **ERASERHEAD** (David Lynch, 1976)
- 27 **INFERNO** (Dario Argento, 1980)
- 28 **THE THING FROM OUTER SPACE** (Christian Nyby, 1951)
- 29 **QUATERMASS AND THE PIT** (Roy Ward Baker, 1967)
- 30 **REPULSION** (Roman Polanski, 1965)
- 31 **SHIVERS** (David Cronenberg, 1976)
- 32 **BLUE VELVET** (David Lynch, 1986)
- 33 **DAY OF THE DEAD** (George A Romero, 1985)

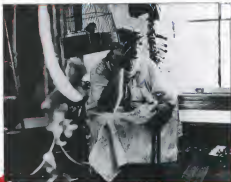
BLOODSOAKED BEST

Massacre) and the more obscure (Shindo's *Onibaba*, Franju's *Les Yeux Sans Visage*) and includes some of those films which sit precariously on the fringe of the horror genre (*Blue Velvet*, *Night of the Hunter*, *Apocalypse Now*, *Taxi Driver*). I was eventually persuaded to include the latter as they all certainly contain horrific moments, albeit unconventional ones. One of the main difficulties in compiling any list of horror films is deciding just where to draw the line. As you can see, my criteria for inclusion are fairly loose. Perhaps it is better that way. I'm not sure. After all, if you want to be pedantic, would you class *Alien* as a horror film, or is it science fiction?

If you haven't seen all the films listed, don't worry: I haven't either. But I hope your appetite will be whetted, as mine has been, by the selection here, and that you will feel encouraged to explore those cinematic territories perhaps hitherto unknown to you.

Finally, thanks to those who took the time to rack their brains and commit their favourites to paper; and thanks also, of course, to the filmmakers – past, present and future. Long may they make us squirm.

Mark Salisbury



THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

MOVIES

- 34 THE FLY (David Cronenberg, 1986)
- 35 DEEP RED (Dario Argento, 1975)
- 36 NIGHT OF THE HUNTER (Charles Laughton, 1955)
- 37 DEATH LINE (Gary Sherman, 1972)
- 38 THE SEVENTH VICTIM (Mark Robson, 1943)
- 39 MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH (Roger Corman, 1960)
- 40 LES YEUX SANS VISAGE (Georges Franju, 1959)
- 41 THE WICKER MAN (Robin Hardy, 1973)
- 42 DON'T LOOK NOW (Nicolas Roeg, 1973)
- 43 DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS (Harry Kuemel, 1971)
- 44 FREAKS (Tod Browning, 1932)
- 45 THE BROOD (David Cronenberg, 1980)
- 46 THE ABOMINABLE DR PHIBES (Robert Fuest, 1971)
- 47 THE OMEN (Richard Donner, 1976)
- 48 MARTIN (George A Romero, 1977)
- 49 JAWS (Steven Spielberg, 1975)
- 50 APOCALYPSE NOW (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979)
- 51 THEM! (Gordon Douglas, 1954)
- 52 VAMPIRE (Carl Dreyer, 1931)
- 53 TOMB OF LIGEIA (Roger Corman, 1964)
- 54 TAXI DRIVER (Martin Scorsese, 1976)
- 55 ALIENS (James Cameron, 1986)
- 56 DEAD OF NIGHT (Alberto Cavalcanti, Charles Crichton, Robert Hamer, Basil Dearden, 1945)
- 57 ONIBABA (Kaneto Shindo, 1964)
- 58 BLACK SUNDAY (Mario Bava, 1960)
- 59 MAD LOVE (Karl Freund, 1935)
- 60 CAT PEOPLE (Jacques Tourneur, 1942)

Top Sixty compiled from lists by: Pete Atkins, Clive Barker, Ann Billson, John Brosnan, Ramsey Campbell, Patience Cosher, Giovanni D'Adamo, Mel Donovan, Liviza, Nigel Floyd, Christopher Fowler, Oliver Frey, Stephen Gallagher, John Gilbert, James Herbert, Shaun Hutson, Stefan Jaworzyn, Alan Jones, Stephen

Jones, Bob Keen, Mark Kermode, Roz Kidd, Stephen Laws, Tim Lucas, David McGillivray, Kim Newman, Philip Nunn, Julian Pettley, David Picie, Geoff Portass, Richard Rayner, Jonathan Ross, Richard R Rubinstein, Jonathan Rutter, Mark Salisbury, David Western.

TOP SHOCKS

PSYCHO

A testament to Hitchcock's perverse brand of humour, this film – which is essentially a comedy, albeit a very black one – sits comfortably atop the list of all-time horror greats. With its stunningly executed set pieces, screeching and oft-imitated Bernard Herrmann score, and Anthony Perkins as the hospitable yet deranged Norman Bates, *Psycho* works its wicked charms on the uninitiated as effectively today as it did on its release thirty years ago. Available on self-through video, price £9.99

THE THING

John Carpenter's much maligned remake of the Howard Hawks/Christian Nyby Fifties shocker, which reverts – courtesy of Rob Bottin and his outlandish special effects – to the shape-shifting alien of the Joseph W Campbell novella. This film was a box office failure on its initial release, due mainly to the reactionary response of audiences who seemed to prefer their extra-terrestrial visitors cute rather than nasty (1982 was also the summer of ET). A cold, uncompromising, downbeat picture; Carpenter's prowling Steadicam and Morricone's synthesised score even now make for an unnerving viewing experience. Great title though. Also available on self-through video, £9.99.

THE EXORCIST/THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE/NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

Though all three of these films mark a turning point in the history of the horror genre, only the latter is currently available on video (in an appalling colourised version, on self-through, price £9.99). This is the result of an anomaly which prohibits us from watching a film at home, when we can safely see the same film in the cinema. It's a stupid anomaly, but it's there – for now. Each movie evokes in the viewer a feeling equal to that of waking nightmare; and each has its quite unforgettable moments which remain forever etched on one's consciousness – the crucifix scene from *The Exorcist*, Leatherface's pursuit of Marilyn Burns in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and the cemetery sequence in *Night of the Living Dead* – and each has a sequel or remake in the works.

ELVIRA'S TOP TEN

- 1 **PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE.** The producers should have stuck to plan one and made a musical.
- 2 **ATTACK OF THE KILLER SHREWS.** See amazing Afghan hounds in cheap rat masks!
- 3 **JESSE JAMES MEETS FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER.** Another typical romance – boy meets ghoul.
- 4 **GLEN OR GLENDA.** Loved Glen, hated Glenda.
- 5 **WILD WOMEN OF WONGO.** Proves that two Wongos don't make a Wight-o.
- 6 **THE CREEPING TERROR.** Dangerous shag carpeting goes on the rampage.
- 7 **ROBOT MONSTER.** Another film you'll be sure to want to miss.
- 8 **ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT WOMAN.** So much woman, so little plot.
- 9 **MONSTER FROM THE SURF.** Beach Blanket Bizarre!
- 10 **ISHTAR.** Scariest film I've ever seen!
- 10 (alternate) **CAT WOMEN ON THE MOON.** Purrfectly horrible!

SHAUN HUTSON'S TOP TEN

- 1 **ALIEN.** Far superior to its sequel; practically unsurpassed for its brooding, claustrophobic atmosphere. The alien itself is still one of the most unforgettable screen images for me and, from the time it bursts out of John Hurt, its unseen presence aboard the *Nostromo* creates incredible suspense. Has its knockers now, but still brilliant.
- 2 **PSYCHO.** The grandfather of them all. I saw it first on TV as a kid of about six and it did serious things to my underwear. Since then I've come to admire its black humour ('My mother isn't quite herself today') and to marvel at the fact that, despite being almost thirty years old, it still beats the crap out of 90 per cent of the horror films being made today.
- 3 **THE EXORCIST.** To this day, one of the few films I can't watch late at night. The cinematic equivalent of being hit round the head with a brick. Immensely powerful, technically brilliant and absolutely terrifying. (Where's that crucifix gone...?)
- 4 **MANHUNTER.** Quite simply the finest film I've seen since *Taxi Driver* (which I would also have included here, but apparently it doesn't count as a horror film...!). Stylish, frightening and unbearably gripping. A film which displays something so sadly lacking in films these days, namely – intelligence. More horror conveyed in the dialogue than by any amount of exploding heads and flesh-eating corpses. (Remind me to develop my holiday snaps at home from now on...)
- 5 **HALLOWEEN.** Suspense pushed to the limit by a master of the craft. I saw this with a packed audience late one night and, when the body swung out of the closet, there were about two hundred people hanging from the light fittings... I still think *The Fog* is Carpenter's best film, but *Halloween* scared me more.
- 6 **THE THING (1982).** Remembered for its superb special effects but its tension is sometimes forgotten. Wonderfully bleak and paranoid ('Trust no one'). Great soundtrack too from Ennio Morricone (featuring the unreleased hit 'For a Few Entrails More').
- 7 **THE OMEGA MAN.** I know it's not faithful to Matheson's novel, but it scared the shit out of me when I first saw it aged twelve and I still like it today. Opening scenes of Charlton Heston driving around a deserted LA are wonderful. Nicely unexpected ending too.
- 8 **DRACULA (1958).** The best Dracula ever to stalk the screen in the person of Christopher Lee in the most stylish version of Stoker's story. Hammer made cheap sets and cheap movies look classy. *Dracula* is one of the classiest of the lot. Still looks good today. Peter Cushing as Van Helsing also brilliant. The end sequence in the hall of Castle Dracula is justifiably famous.
- 9 **THE FLY (1987).** Cronenberg's superb remake. Jeff Goldblum is suitably manic as the scientist who discovers he's turning into a bluebottle big enough to put Vapora out of business. By turns erotic, funny, moving and frightening. Carries the director's obsession with disease and physical decay to even greater limits than before. (I'll never use a swatwar again...)
- 10 **TAXI DRIVER.** Sod it, had to include it... The horror of urban alienation as embodied by Travis Bickle, superbly played by Robert De Niro. He tries to fit in but can't, tries to find a meaning to life but can't – until he finds that fulfilment will come in blowing away three pimps. And when he blows them away, he doesn't see half measures... he uses three guns. Massively violent finale, superbly choreographed by possibly the finest director working in film at the moment – Martin Scorsese. Sheer brilliance. (Call me a cab...)

WHEN IT COMES TO TERROR...
THEY'RE IN A FIELD OF THEIR OWN

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Executive in Charge of Production FREDERICK SHORE Story by WILLIAM WHELEY Written by RICHARD YIPAN and WILLIAM WHELEY Produced by CAMPBELL/OTTOLUCCI and WILLIAM WHELEY Produced by WILLIAM WHELEY



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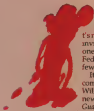


"BOOK NOW AT YOUR LOCAL VIDEO STORE!"

18

ROOT

Matthew Costello reports on *The Guardian*, William Friedkin's latest horror movie, in which a tree has landed a starring role.



It's not often I get an invitation like the one that arrived via Federal Express a few weeks ago.

It was an offer to come to the set of William Friedkin's new film, *The Guardian*, and

watch the filming of the special effects-laden climax. It was an unusual offer because directors are, at best, reluctant to have writers make even a quickie tour of active sets. And the film's finale is usually the most tense time.

I had to turn the invitation down (a week in California didn't fit in with my other plans, which included finishing my new novel, *Wurm*, for Berkley/Putnam), but it told me that something interesting might be going on with the Friedkin production.

The Guardian is based on Dan Greenburg's 1987 bestseller, *The Nanny*. And no, the novel doesn't detail the plight of Hollywood stars who run off with their kid's overly attractive *au pair*. The story is in the tradition of the Gothic suspense tale. There's a dark forest and a hideous tree that lives by taking young babies into its fold. A young, working couple—that cliché of modern times—decide to hire a nanny, but it turns out that she will battle with them for their baby.

All right... at first blush the story doesn't seem all that compelling. But it does have that streamline feel of fairytale, of the struggle of good versus evil. The tree, a demon god, harkens back to pagan nature worship, an interesting theme that hasn't been done to death in the horror genre; and, with Friedkin directing, we can expect the film to be compelling. It's his first contemporary horror story since

the Oscar-winning *The Exorcist* in 1973 (see *FEAR* Issue 11 for details of the sequel). That landmark film led to the rebirth of the horror film, and the host of goofy, gory nutcases who appear in endless sequels.

GRIMM FAIRYTALE

Although Friedkin says that he is entertained by those pictures, he hopes in *The Guardian* to summon a more universal fear than hockey masks and machetes.

'The genre today,' he says, 'has become basically a sendup of itself. *The Nightmare on Elm Street* films are good films but they are perceived almost as comedies. That's different to what we're doing here...'

The cast includes Dwier Brown, Carey Lowell and Jenny Seagrove. Brown played Kevin Costner's father in *Field of Dreams* and Carey Lowell starred in the latest James Bond opus, *Licence to Kill*. Jenny Seagrove—the nanny—starred in the miniseries *A Woman of Substance* and Bill Forsyth's delightful *Local Hero*. Seagrove also costars with Jeremy Irons and Anthony Hopkins in the upcoming film of Alan Ayckbourn's play, *A Chorus of Disapproval*.

Friedkin rewrote Stephen Volk's original script. Volk wrote *The Kiss* and Ken Russell's *Gothic*. 'This is a realistic film about inexplicable things,' Friedkin says. 'I'd call it a suspense horror film along the lines of a Brothers Grimm story... but with a realistic foundation.'

The director's first hit, *The French Connection* (1971), won him the Academy Award for Best Picture, and his most recent film was the stylish crime thriller, *To Live and Die in LA* (1985). But he is a self-proclaimed admirer of classic

'The tree, a demon god, harkens back to pagan nature worship, an interesting theme that hasn't been done to death in the horror genre'



MOVIE MAINLINE

S



'What I liked about the original script of this film was that it dealt with a basic primal fear by centring on a family and what happens when that is threatened'



Tree surgery: Friedkin's woody villain spouts blood and sustains itself by taking babies into its fold (top): Kate (Carey Lowell) and Phil (Dwier Brown) greet the new nanny, Carmilla (Jenny Seagrove, centre)

horror films like *Rosemary's Baby* and *Alien* and, though there are plenty of special effects in *The Guardian*, Friedkin sees this as a film about characters we believe in. 'What I liked about the original script of this film was that it dealt with a basic primal fear by centring on a family and what happens when that is threatened.'

WOOD WORK

Producer Joe Wizan approached the director with Volk's original script last year. 'What Billy Friedkin has here is a story that is ultimately about who you entrust your children to.'

Though the film focuses on the interplay between the nanny and the parents, there are unusual special effects of which the demon tree is the most important. The tree was constructed by production designer Gregg Fonesca, who worked on the original *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and last summer's big Disney hit, *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* (see Movie Mainline for review of the latter).

Fonesca's team built a three-storey tree that dominates the mysterious part of the forest into which Seagrove's nanny often disappears. The steel structure is twelve feet in diameter and hydraulics enable it to move in a realistic, eerie way. This is no rubber tree from *The Wizard of Oz*.

'When this tree moves,' says Fonesca, 'you hear the wood splintering.'

HOME AND HEARTH

Outside the wood, Fonesca has tried to capture the normality of the couple's life – the more to increase the horror that threatens them. 'We started with the concept that this was a good horror story about ordinary people,' he says. 'They are becoming assimilated into the pop culture of California [but at the same time] they are not losing the values of home, hearth and children. So, in detailing their environment, we stress that there is nothing out of the ordinary.'

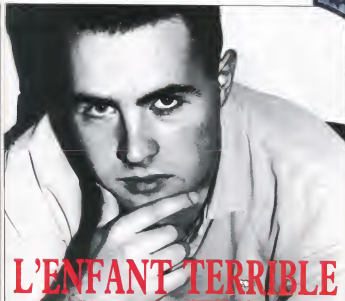
Other special effects are being

created by Peter Chesney of Image Engineering, Matthew Mungle, who did make-up for *Scrooged* and *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, is handling Seagrove's nanny – a make-up job that often takes nearly five hours.

John A. Alonzo, who filmed *Chinatown* and *Scarface*, is the cinematographer; and, in an interesting aside, Denise Cronenberg is doing the costumes. Cronenberg has worked on her brother, David's, films *Vulcan*, *The Dead Zone* and *The Fly*.

Like Bill Blatty – who returned to his roots with *The Exorcist* in 1990, Friedkin is returning to a genre that he helped to revive. But, like Blatty, Friedkin has given early warning that the effects and shocks in his new film will be an integral part of a story about people – and not just a thrill ride of cinematic splatter.





L'ENFANT TERRIBLE

Still in his early twenties, Mark Morris is Britain's youngest horror novelist. Despite several years on the dole, with little outside aid or money, he managed to sell his second novel, *Toady*, to a hardback publisher and clinch a deal. Naturally, John Gilbert wanted to know how he did it.

Young, keen – and chronically unemployed. It sounds like the recipe for so many failures of youth, particularly when you live in the north of England. But Mark Morris, who has recently published his first horror novel, *Toady*, has already impressed the hell out of genre pundits, turned all those apparent disadvantages around and, in a series of moves

"Because it's so long, they've got to put it out as a lead title and put a lot behind it"

timetabled by economic necessity, become a published writer.

I went through all the various education channels to the extent that I did a degree in Leeds, and came out of the

degree not knowing what I wanted to do.

I went on the dole and looked around – not particularly enthusiastically – for jobs, applying for things I wasn't really sure I wanted to do. I started off writing as a hobby and I wrote things like storylines that I sent into TV programmes, and short stories, and things like that, though I didn't really know the market for them.

The publishers would say, 'I'm sorry, I don't publish short stories but you could try here, there and everywhere.' Very gradually, I learned about markets and presentation while I was on the dole. In that time I went from looking for jobs to not looking for jobs: I just thought, 'I'm going to go as a writer. I always had faith that I could do it and I don't know where that came from – probably just stupidity.'

I lived in a freezing cold bedsit, had twenty pence a week for the heating. It's a typical writer in a frozen garret sort of thing. I wrote a novel called *The Winter Tree*, which I

submitted to about twelve publishers. The very first publisher I sent it to almost published it, which would have been amazing but in the long run it might have been harmful as well, because it wasn't that brilliant a novel.

LEAD TIME

Four of the twelve publishers to which he submitted the novel enjoyed it, so he continued to send it out while writing his next book, *Toady*. 'By the time I submitted *The Winter Tree* to Platkus, I was only about ten

"I lived in a freezing cold bedsit, had twenty pence a week for the heating. It's a typical writer in a frozen garret sort of thing"

months away from finishing *Toady*, which took two-and-a-half years. When I'd finished it I just wrote to them and said, 'would you like to look at it?' I also wrote to a couple of other publishers. They all answered 'Yes'.

'One of them said that *Toady* was far too long and another one said it was too long but had definite possibilities and they'd like it if I cut it down. And

Platkus said, 'Yes, we'll publish it, but would you cut 200 pages out of it.'"

Corgi books in Britain and, hopefully, Bantam in America will publish *Toady* as a lead paperback title next year and, despite the original criticisms about the length of the novel Morris is thankful that it resembles a tome rather than a wader than novel. 'In a way, it's good that I wrote a 500-page book because, if it had been 260

"I think that certain scenes are going to annoy a lot of people, and maybe offend a lot of people"

pages and Corgi had bought it, it would have probably been a mid-list book. But, because it's so long, they've got to put it out as a lead title and put a lot behind it.'

CLOSE TO HOME

A paperback deal is unusual for a first time novelist but Morris was fortunate enough to land with Platkus, who acted as his agent. 'The only problems that they take 50 per cent, which is pretty huge, but then again I was grateful to them for selling the paperback at all.'

American rights are often difficult to negotiate because some publishers believe that the US public do not like Englishness in books. It's also a tough and overcrowded market. But, while Morris would like to see an American sales success with *Toady* he will not rewrite it for that market just to give his book an Anglo-American feel. 'I believe in the English horror-writing tradition. We should all stick together. I'd always write English books. I write very close to home at the moment, and I hope that will expand as I get more confident.'

His new book is set in a environment very different to that of *Toady*, but one which he knows well. 'The next one is called *Stitch* and it's set on a university campus. Where *Toady* was horror/fantasy, this is more of a horror/thriller. It's going to be much darker and much grimmer than *Toady*. It's about man's desire and capacity for sin and about the dark side of sexuality and it goes into some very grim areas. I think that certain scenes are going to annoy a lot of people, and maybe offend a lot of people.'

Whether she's playing a castaway on a desert island, an erotic teacher of young girls or an ageless snake priestess, Amanda Donohoe has to know what she'll get out of a role. On a brief respite from the fun of filming, she tells John Gilbert why she starred in *Lair of the White Worm* when, under other circumstances, she would not have touched the role of vampiric aristo Lady Sylvia with a barge-pole.



MY WICKED WAYS

Amanda Donohoe has an onscreen reputation as a hellraiser who romps and raves her outrageous way through every starring role. She accepted the challenge of being cast away on a desert island with the notorious Oliver Reed, played a major part in a young girl's sexual awakening in *The Rainbow*, and donned fangs to play Lady Sylvia, a vampiric snake goddess in *Lair of the White Worm*. Lady Sylvia, at her most wicked, bites off a young boy's penis while he's taking a bath. Can this be the real Amanda Donohoe?

'I like playing things that are so far away from me that the challenge is there. With Lady Sylvia, the joy to me of that part was that people believed in her, they got a sense that she was somehow ageless which was great because it meant I'd done my job. I'm very pleased with her. Personally she's my most satisfying character.'

And yet she would not have appeared in the film if any other director but Ken Russell had approached her to do it. 'If anybody but Ken had sent me *The Lair of the White Worm*, I would have thrown it in the dustbin. But because Ken sent it

and wrote it I immediately tuned into the extremes of this rather amusing project.

'I appreciate Ken's wicked sense of humour and I'm very happy to indulge in it with him. I think that story without the humour would have been as dead as a dodo. I remember saying, 'Ken, shall I read the book,' and Ken assured me that the book was not worth picking up.'

TERRIBLY, TERRIBLY NICE

Donohoe did use some of Bram Stoker's influences for her portrayal in *Lair of the White*

"If anybody but Ken had sent me *The Lair of the White Worm*, I would have thrown it in the dustbin"

Worm, but she took other parts of Lady Sylvia from the most startling places. 'She's a cross between Count Dracula and Gertrude Lawrence. We had this scene with Lord James, where he first comes to the house and meets Lady Sylvia after she's disposed of the boy scout in the bath. She opens the door and he says, 'I've just come to see if there's been any more trouble with snakes', and there's this whole scene afterwards. Ken gave us a cassette tape and said, 'Go away and play this'. On the tape was assorted music as well as a clip from a radio play with Gertrude

Lawrence and Noel Coward doing some terribly, terribly nice sketch, all very clipped and very furtive.

'Hue Grant and I came back and said, 'Ken, this is very amusing, but what on earth did you want us to listen to it for?' He said, 'That's how I want you to play the scene. I want Gertrude Lawrence and Noel Coward.' And so that's how we really went with it.'

Amanda Donohoe has made two films with Ken Russell, the second is an adaptation of *The Rainbow* by DH Lawrence, but it is *Lair of the White Worm* which she remembers with most affection. 'It was much more fun. There were times when the crew just wouldn't stop laughing, especially the boy in the bath stuff, which is one of the classic scenes in film history.'

CARRIED AWAY

Director Ken Russell is renowned for allowing his actors and actresses great freedom of interpretation. The same holds true in *Lair of the White Worm*, not only for the way in which characters acted but also in what they wore. So much so that Amanda Donohoe was able to choose what she wore - or did not wear - in the movie's finale. 'I wanted her to look like some kind of demented Amazonian tribeswoman.'

The costume designer and I went away and developed this make-up and G-string together and I said, 'Ken, look, if I feel really stupid in this thing, I'm not going to be able to do it. I

will not have the confidence to stand there and be the high priestess if I feel ludicrous.' He said, 'No, I understand that. Go away and develop something which you feel good with.' I tried all this stuff on, and got a little carried away. It was good and I could get away with it without feeling like a complete prat.'

Would she have done that provocative ending to the film if Ken Russell had not been the director? Without a moment's hesitation, she says: 'No! Absolutely and definitely, no! I think that because I am who I

"I think that the reason Ken asked me to work with him was because he could see that I was a fairly brave actor: Castaway proved that"

am, and I think that the reason Ken asked me to work with him was because he could see that I was a fairly brave actor. Castaway proved that. Ken needs actors to input, he needs you to develop his original idea into something that's real and comfortable for the individual.'

'He gave me an enormous amount of freedom, without which I would have been too intimidated to do half the stuff I did. Because he just literally wound me up and let me go I could be excessive

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BLACK SUNDAY AND RAVES FROM THE GRAVE

A bumper crop of northern film fests breaks just after Christmas with a much expanded Black Sunday in February and, in January, an incredible (possibly controversial) graveside showing of some of our genres' most appalling films.

First - Black Sunday, which has been split into two events in Manchester and Glasgow (the same films will probably be shown at both venues). The first event takes place on February 17 at the Metro Cinema, Ashton Under Lyne, while the second occurs at the Salon Cinema, Hillhead, Glasgow. So that's one small complaint about the size of last year's festival satisfied.

The organisers have also taken into consideration comments about the lack of gore in the last event and combined some pretty good films with some tough nuts - for those who want to leave their stomachs at home. The movies scheduled so far include:

Stepfather 2, (see this month's American Nightmares). The father of your dreams returns for more hack, slash and suspense.

Society. If you missed this movie at Shock Around the Clock 3, then you can catch up with it here. Sexually and morally provocative, it tells the tale of a rich kid who suddenly discovers what his parents and others of their ilk do to the poor brats on the block. Hollywood shine meets SoHo sleaze in a big way, so this will probably be the big genre movie of the year (we'll be covering it in glorious detail in the next few issues of **FEAR**). Medusa Pictures have this movie for both theatrical and video release. It should be a smasher.

Phantom of the Opera. Fast becoming as notorious for not starring Michael Crawford than for frontlining Robert 'Freddy' England in yet another heavy make-up role. The story parallels events in contemporary America with horrors that occurred in nineteenth century Europe. Jill Schoelen stars as a young student who is injured in an accident, finds herself unconscious and is thrown back in time to end up face to face with the Phantom. All appears to be well as she recovers but soon people around her begin to die in strange and disgusting ways. The film is due for launch



Small Iowa vampires strike out in Sundown



John Steed never looked like this, but then he didn't land the female victim role in Sundown

next year from Castle Pictures. Sundown. A vampire flick with a difference. Directed by Anthony Hickox, who also made *Waxwork*, it describes the attempts of a small American community to survive. The only difference is that these cowboys - and girls - are vampires, led by David Carradine. They've built a local blood-generating plant

but its architect, an eternally young thug played by Maxwell Caulfield, wants to destroy Carradine, control the town, and go back to the traditional methods of vampirism ie human blood-sucking. Like *Waxwork*, this is a riotous comedy which should prove successful for distributor Vestron Pictures.

More films are on the way,

and we'll report on them in the next issue. We suggest that you book tickets now, however, as the demand, like last year, is bound to be great. More information can be obtained from Black Sunday, 70 Thatch Leach Lane, Whitefield, Manchester, M25 6EW.

Malcolm Daglish, one of the organisers of Black Sunday, is also helping to put together two more screening events in the Manchester area. The first is at the Society of Fantastic Films on January 12, 1990 at 9.00. The films include *Chamber of Horrors* and *Night of the Living Dead*, and such classics are interspersed with episodes from the dreadful *Plan 9 From Outer Space*.

The most unusual film event of next year, however, is likely to be Terror Amongst the Tombs. Sounds a bit like an acid house party this one, as it will take place in a church with a real live graveyard ready and waiting outside for anyone foolhardy enough to leave while the event is taking place. The films include *The Evil Dead*, *Swamp of the Lost Monsters* and *Lady Frankenstein*. Well... hem... at least the scenery will get you in the mood.

More details of both events can be obtained from the same address we've given for Black Sunday. Have fun.

JEFFREY ARCHER IN SAUCY SUN SHOCKER

San journalist Chris Hockley filled Jeffrey Archer's swimming pool with 'blood, sweat and tears' during the year it took him to write his first horror novel, *Steel Ghost*, for Grafton Books.

The sub-editor's book is a cold war nightmare, in which Bolshevik butcher Stalin comes back to continue his reign of terror. The fiction is hot-bloodedly written against the backdrop of World War 2, London, Kashmir, the Crimea and Russia's infamous Lubyanka jail.

Chris's tale could not have come at a better time, with the tearing down of the Berlin wall and democratisation of the USSR. The book does not rely on contemporary cold war theories but, rather, echoes the past as a chilling reminder to everybody who questions Perestroika.

Steel Ghost is available in paperback, price £3.50. You can read our review in this issue...

GIGER'S ALIEN RETURNS

Artist H.R. Giger's fabulous *Alien* design film book is about to see print again courtesy of Titan Books.

The American edition was launched more than ten years ago and details the fine design work required to make Ridley Scott's horrific science fiction film.

Titan's English edition takes the form of a glossy, illustrated diary, offering an insight into Giger's work through his own eyes. It includes sketches, original paintings, photographs of scenery, several stages of the alien's construction and colour stills from the film - including John Hurt's famous exit.

Slightly overpriced at £14.95, the 72-page book, with foreword by Timothy Leary, nevertheless offers a unique insight into one of the most controversial SF suspense movies ever made.

CALAMITY IN HARROW

Calamity Comics and Books of Station Road, Harrow in Middlesex has become such a success during its three year tenure that directors John Holmes and Eric Vandegreden have been forced to move to bigger premises.

Soon you'll find them at 160 Station Road, Harrow. The move date had not been set at the time of going to press, so if you have any initial problems in locating the shop just give Eric or John a call on (01) 427 3831 and they'll be glad to give info about directions, signings and current special offers at the shop.

Eric is keen on the new shift in business gear but also assures regular customers that the level of personal attention which has made the shop such a success will not change: 'While we shall still be able to offer the same levels of service, our range of comics, books and videos (both

old and new) will be greatly improved.'

As a special opening offer, a 30 per cent discount is available on presentation of the advert for Calamity in this issue of **FEAR**. The new year will also see a number of comic signings and you're advised to check the local press, or **FEAR**, for details.



WORLD HORROR CONVENTION

The first World Horror Convention will be launched in Nashville, Tennessee over 28 February-3 March 1991. An attempt to give horror fans more than they can expect from most World Fantasy or World SF conventions, World Horror will be organised by the same staff who

ran the 1987 World Fantasy Convention in Nashville and will concentrate on all forms of the genre, including fiction, art and movies.

Writer Guest of Honour will be Clive Barker, with Jill Bauman as Artist Guest of Honour and Splatterpunk David Schow, John Skipp and Craig Spector billed as 'Trimatic Trio of MCs'. The venue is the Nashville Hyatt Regency, and memberships are \$50 until 31 June 1990 and \$65 thereafter.

Membership is limited to 1,000 and the first progress report will be published in March.

According to WHC board member Charles L. Grant, for the first two years the convention will remain in Nashville 'until the bugs are worked out', before it moves on to other locations.

For more details, contact World Horror Convention, PO Box 22817, Nashville, TN 37202 or call (615) 226-6172.

Stephen Jones

SORRY FOLKS...

We have been asked to point out that a story concerning the production of *Hell on Earth: Heilbroner 3*, printed in the Movie Mainline column of **FEAR** Issue 12, was inaccurate. Harley Cockiss is in no way connected with the project and the film has yet to go into production. Our apologies to all concerned, in particular Peter Atkins, New World Pictures and Clive Barker.

Apologies are also due to Sheryl Weillgosh from New York whose photo of John Farris (*FEAR* Issue 7) was printed without a credit. We do have an itty-bitty excuse here, however, which is that there was no credit attached to the photo in the first place... Sorry, anyway.

Whilst we're on our knees - apologies to Entertainment Film Distributors, or at least to one of their eagle-eyed employees who spotted a further mistake in **FEAR** Issue 12. We stated that Stuart Gordon's *Pit and the Pendulum* is a Castle Pictures release; in fact this production will be released by - you guessed it - Entertainment.

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FAST FORWARD FOR MERSEY CON

Quatermass author Nigel Kneale and science fiction writer Iain M Banks will be among the guests at next year's EastCon.

The science fiction-oriented convention will be held at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool during the Easter weekend 13-16 April 1990. It will include writers' workshops, talks by prominent scientists and lecturers, a fancy dress competition and a large dealer's room for the sale of 'books, swords, games, comics, jewellery, badges, videos... or anything else'.

Several awards will be presented at the convention. They include the Arthur C Clarke award for best British novel, the Doc Weir award for outstanding contributions to fandom and the Ken McIntyre award for artwork appearing in fanzines. The BFA awards will also be presented, and the categories for these are Best Novel, Best Short Story, Best Art and Media.

The programme of events and information about attendance should be sought from EastCon 90, 15 Maldon Close, Camberwell, London SE23 8DD.

FANGS COME OUT IN HOLLYWOOD

Flashing back to New York for exclusives by the bucketload, FEAR's Philip Nutman dissects Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer, talks to Society director Brian Yuzna, and dreams of vampires in Red Sleep.



Leatherface

DATELINE: New York City, November 1989

Halloween is gone for this year, but the usual Fall crop of fright flicks is still on show. Wes Craven's *Shocker*, the much awaited return of Freddy's creator to pseudo-Elm Street territory, had a mixed opening all round; generally negative reviews and lukewarm audience response do not bode well for the producers' plans to turn Horror Pinkerton into a Freddy substitute. Hey guys, United Artists already tried that with Max Jenke in *Horror Show* and it didn't work for them either! *Halloween 5* opened well (\$5 million on its first weekend) but even die-hard fans seemed to have a problem with the worn plot.

Communion, based on the supposedly true experiences of Whitley (I was shot at by Charles Whitman) Stricker and his little green friends with a passion for rectal probing, opened to a thumbs-up from Jamie Bernard in *The New York Post*. With Christopher Walken playing Stricker, the film promises at least to contain something of interest.

Robert Englund's much publicised trip from Elm Street to Paris for *Phantom of the Opera*, however, appears to have excited audiences but not the critics, with *The Post* dismissing the picture as 'lots of torn flesh and pus...'. Oh well, maybe Robert Englund will go back to doing Shakespeare. Anyone for *Macbeth* on Elm Street?

And, finally, there's *Stepfather 2*, again starring the excellent Terry O'Quinn as the looney toons parent with a murderous obsession for Leave it to Beaver-

isms and a good breakfast every morning. More on these releases next issue.

But where, you may ask, was *Leatherface: Texas Chainsaw Massacre 3*? The answer: put back to 1990 due to reshoots and censorship problems.

HENRY - 1989'S MOST IMPORTANT MOVIE?

Loosely based on the life of mass murderer Henry Lee Lucas, *Henry - Portrait of a Serial Killer* is unquestionably the most disturbing horror film of recent years - perhaps of the decade; but, because of its very ability to deliver at all, *Henry* may turn out to be one of those much talked about, little seen classics, a high tide mark in a genre fast becoming stuck in a safe, formulaic position that looks unlikely to change for several years. For this reason alone we need films like *Henry*, motion pictures that break the rules and provide an essential vitamin injection into the tired body of horror.

Shot on 16mm in 1986 for \$100,000 by first time director John McNaughton, the film's release plans were brought to a halt by the intervention of Henry Lee Lucas's lawyers. Still awaiting execution on Death Row in Huntsville, Texas after being convicted of 11 murders and suspected of 150 more, the mass murderer and his representatives were not pleased to hear the film had been made, and it took financiers MPI Home Video two years to sort through the legalities before they could submit the picture to the MPAA. And that's when the real problems started.

The film was rejected from the R rating category and awarded an X (or 21s only - usually indicative of hardcore pornography). MPI, who were planning to launch the film as their first venture into theatrical distribution, contested the decision but were met with a cold response from the Board, who felt that it was not a question of which scenes

should be cut, but a response founded on the subject matter.

Having seen the film three times, I can understand that response, but not the decision. *Henry* is an intense film that impartially probes the darkness of a disturbed mind, but it is not especially violent, or exploitative of its subject matter. In comparison with, say, *Road House*, or *Lethal Weapon 2*, this film is an exercise in restraint: *Henry*'s problem lies in its subject matter and its grounding in reality. As coproducer Steven A Jones told journalist Kim Howard Johnson, 'He's still out there at the end of the movie, and that disturbs a lot of people'. Even in the late 1980s, the pre World War Two studio morality that implies the bad guy must get his deserts at the end of the picture holds sway in the minds of many people.

Set in Chicago, the story is very straightforward but eschews typical dramatic

and the only way he can let off steam when he's upset is to go out and snuff someone out, an activity that increases with the enthusiastic accompaniment of Otis.

Becky, on the other hand, believes that Henry is just a fellow soul who has been dealt several crushing blows by society and can be redeemed by love; but, since this isn't an empty-headed Hollywood melodrama, that is not the case. With a cold, detached viewpoint mirroring that of the lead character, McNaughton quietly follows the black spiral of murder to its insular conclusion, showing most of the blood-letting after the fact, avoiding sub-Hitchcockian stalk-and-slash techniques in favour of static shots and highly effective use of audio flashbacks on the soundtrack to a disconcerting degree.

Henry makes for essentially thought-provoking viewing. Fortunately, MPI have decided



Bride of the Reanimator - a two-parter?

structure; it is more like a skim through someone's photo collection than a self-contained story, and this contributes to the picture's chilling effect.

The film opens with Becky, a young woman with a troubled past, escaping her failed marriage and moving to Chicago to live with her sleazy brother, Otis. Otis has another room-mate whom he has known since their days as prison inmates. In comparison with her sexist, low-life brother, Henry comes over as a model of solid working class values, a gentle soul who treats Becky with respect, though this is primarily the result of his emotional repression rather than his efforts to be a 'new man', hip to equality between the sexes. So, it's no surprise that Becky does not believe him when he admits killing his mother because she was a whore who dressed him as a girl and sexually abused him. The titular character is definitely a few bricks short of a full load,

to release the film on tape unrated in the US, and we can only hope that, if an enterprising UK distributor does pick up the rights, the BBFC will adopt a more intelligent stance on the film's subject matter than the closed-minded response of the MPAA.

SOCIETY - WHAT THE RICH REALLY GET UP TO

If there is to be any hope for the horror genre it lies in the much beleaguered independent field and, next to *Henry - Portrait of a Serial Killer*, the most interesting movie to appear this year is *Society*, the directorial debut of *Re-Animator* producer, Brian Yuzna.

Like John McNaughton's stunning picture, *Society* is not afraid to break the rules, and does so with such darkly comic enthusiasm and a finely tuned sense of surrealism that the BBFC have passed the film without cuts. No mean feat

considering the heavy taboos explored by this story of what rich folks really do to the lower classes.

Written by Rick Fry and Woody Keith (who have also penned *Bride of the Re-Animator*) with considerable input from Yuzna, the film stars young Billy Warlock as Bill Whitney, a wealthy Beverly Hills Academy student about to reach his coming of age and enter the powerful society of his parents. But all is not what it appears. Bill hears strange sucking and slurping noises coming from his parents' bedroom, then he is informed by a friend with the hots for Bill's sister that there are some mighty weird goings on in the Whitney household. Like the recording of a conversation between Dad and sis, for instance: 'First we dine, then copulate with someone your own age at first, then with your mother and me.' Bill, of course, doesn't believe this. But things get much weirder as his coming of age approaches.

The original idea for the movie came from Rick Fry, who had previously approached Yuzna with a project entitled *Weird Museum*, but has tapped into something much darker in his collaboration with Woody Keith. As Yuzna puts it: 'This is an uncatchable movie. It's not a typical horror film, and probably the best way to describe it is as a black comedy of manners that turns into a surrealistic nightmare loaded with paranoia and social satire.' It's also about alienation, fear of sex, and is a biting critique of the power structure in America.

The \$1 million movie was shot on location in Beverly Hills and at GMT Studios in Culver City on a very tight schedule. Despite both time and financial restraints, Yuzna indicates that he has a solid grasp of storytelling and a distinct imagination, both of which promise much for the *Re-Animator* sequel (which will open before *Society* in the US in February/March).

On the effects front, Yuzna has pulled off some wonderfully bizarre material with the invaluable contributions of Japan-born fx artist Screaming Mad George. Like *From Beyond*, Yuzna's second *Leenhardt* adaptation, *Society* is a bio-organic sexual nightmare dependent on many strange physical transformations, with Screaming Mad George's crew pulling out all the stops to provide a feast of flesh and goo to delight the most jaded viewers.

Citing Salvador Dali as his biggest mentor, S M George admits to having 'many disgusting ideas' but, by

adopting a surrealist approach to the transformational material, he was able to help the director come up with images that shock without pushing the picture into the realm of an X rating.

Medusa will release the picture here in February/March 1990. Don't miss it.

VAMPIRES - NEW BLOOD

Word from Hollywood has it that vampires will be the next big thing by late 1990, with most of the major studios and several independent companies either developing original scripts or planning to translate popular novels into potential blockbusters - specifically Anne Rice's *Interview With the Vampire* and *The Vampire Lestat*. But one of the most interesting projects approaching the preproduction stage is *Red Sleep*, a present-day thriller set in Las Vegas, penned by Richard Christian Matheson and Mick Garris.

'We're using vampirism as a metaphor for substance abuse,' Garris, the former story editor of Spielberg's *Amazing Stories* and director of *Craters 2*, reveals. 'But this won't be a message picture; it's definitely a horror film.'

The project, financed by the Geffen Company who were responsible for unleashing *Body and Soul*, will be the first produced by a new, currently untitled company formed by R C Matheson, Garris and veteran novelist and screenwriter Richard Matheson, R C's father. Executive produced by John Landis and Leslie Belzer, the film will be directed by Garris, while the younger Matheson produces.

Of the film's genesis, Garris explains: 'Over the course of several discussions, both Richard and I discovered we had ideas concerning vampirism that no one appears to have previously explored. And since Richard had just parted company with his regular co-writer, Tom Sazli, it seemed the perfect opportunity to try a collaboration. From day one we've been delighted to find it's worked far better than we expected, and we didn't have long to wait concerning a deal. If events follow the path they've been heading in, we hope to be shooting by the January.'

Red Sleep's story revolves around a former junkie who, having triumphed over his narcotics addiction, is faced with the curse of immortality and a new, far more disturbing craving: blood. Garris promises the picture will tread some potentially controversial ground, and American

Nightmares will have further exclusive information next issue.

FUTURE SHOCK IN CAMDEN TOWN

Shot over an eight week period in October/November on a budget of \$1.5 million, *Hardwire* is an ambitious SF horror action film written and directed by twenty-four year old Richard Stanley, best known for his work as an innovative director of off-beat video promos for the band Public Image Ltd and doom merchants Fields of the Nephilim. Set in the not too distant future, probably in New York, the script takes on *Robocop* territory from a decidedly Dario Argento perspective.

Mark 13 is a state-of-the-art military android designed to operate at maximum efficiency under maximum stress; but when tests go wrong the prototype, damaged and out for the count, falls into the hands of Moses Baxley (Dylan McDermott from *Hamburger Hill*), a sometime soldier of fortune and black marketer. With Christmas looming, Moses gives part of the machine

to Jill (Stacy Travis), his post industrial sculptress girlfriend, not realising he's inviting something very dangerous into their ramshackle apartment...

'The film goes beyond *Robocop* and *Blade Runner* in its vision of a doomed future,' notes Stanley on the *Hardwire* set (the old Roundhouse music venue in Camden High Street). 'There's no real hope in this film. The story is about survival at its most basic. And a bunch of my other obsessions.'

Co-financed by Palace Pictures/Wicked Films with Marmix in the US, *Hardwire*'s effects are being handled by Image Animation, with Paul Catlin supervising the extensive animatronics, and *Heidi Kramer/Hellbound* veterans Little John and Dave Keen providing the extensive blood and guts. Alongside the two American leads are John Lynch from *Cal* and former *EastEnders* Oscar James, plus cameos from Lemmy of *Motorhead*, Carl McCoy from *The Nephilim*, and an audio guest spot from John Lydon as Angry Bob, the psycho radio DJ.

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FEAR

FEAR FICTION

This month FEAR fiction focuses in particular on a number of young writers who have borne their work through the grim portals of our grisly offices. We have been most impressed with fiction emanating from the younger members of our readership and we are sure you will agree when we say that – from the understated control of Martin Cook's writing in *Clancy*, through the sinister romanticism of Nicola Germain's *Carlisle Hunter*, to the

ambitious novella style of Ian Harding's *State of the Art* – the work of these developing authors is really exciting.

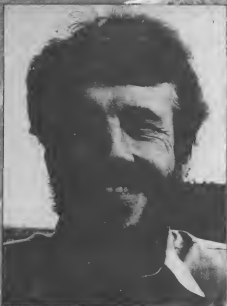
We start the fiction section as usual with a big-name author. Guy N Smith is a prolific novelist and a household name on the lips of any fan of the horror genre; his graphic, oozing images are not for the faint-hearted. *The Decoy*, featured here, is the latest instalment in his fabulous *Crabs* series.

If you have a tale to tell, and if it fits FEAR's horror, science fiction or fantasy brief, then send it to David Western, Fiction Editor, FEAR, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.

Remember to indicate the wordage of your story (which must be typed, preferably double spaced) and ensure that you enclose a day-time phone number, a photograph of yourself and a fifty-word biography.

Readers whose stories are being considered for publication will receive notification of this in writing. This is not a guarantee that your story will be published and, as we can only feature five or six new stories per issue, it could be some time before those eventually selected appear in print. So please be patient – and keep those phone calls to a minimum! Of course, if you need your story back urgently, you can contact us on the usual number.

We are obliged to remind new writers that FEAR does not look kindly upon works of plagiarism. So if you haven't got anything new to say, don't rip off somebody else – sit back instead and savour another fantasy-packed, horror-filled wedge of fabulous FEAR fiction.



Guy N Smith

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"Crabs as
big as cows,
lusting for
human flesh
and blood"

The DEC



Dugan waited until the moon rose before he made his way down to the beach. Tall and lithe, he moved with a stealthy purposefulness, using the shadows to his advantage. 'See without being seen' was his motto, whether it was poaching salmon from the riverbank up at Dofgellau or knocking pheasants from their roosts in the game coverts at Staylittle.

Christ, today had been unbelievable, a bizarre nightmare in the scorching summer sun. His ears still throbbed from the constant heavy gunfire, the screaming of terror-stricken holidaymakers. The death toll ran into dozens. He felt the sweat chilling on his body and was unable to suppress a shudder. He had to be bloody crazy coming back down here when at any second those monsters might lurch out of the incoming tide to launch yet another attack.

Crabs as big as cows, lusting for human flesh and blood, shredding the bodies of their victims in those mighty claws, munching and slurping their prey, seemingly invincible in the hail of gunfire from the heavy artillery which lined the remnants of the wrecked promenade.

Dugan glanced back briefly and saw the floodlit Marine Parade with its barricades. Another platoon of soldiers had recently arrived but it wouldn't do any good, the military were no more than a token force sent to try and pacify public hysteria. Sure, the big guns had accounted for the odd crab, Dugan had watched the crustacean corpses being winched onto trucks, transported to some laboratory where the boffins would try to come up with explanations. Did it really matter why the crabs had mutated, suffice to say that they had? And Barmouth was only the start, they would wreck every coastal town in Britain, claim the shores for their own. Dugan wondered how far inland these creatures could travel; perhaps it was better not to think about it.

You're getting windy, he told himself, stroking the barrels of the heavy gun beneath his arm in an effort to regain some of his former confidence. This was no ordinary shotgun. He held it out, studied its silhouette in the wan moonlight. A double-barrelled sixteen gauge with a 9mm rifle barrel beneath. A 'drilling' made in Germany at the turn of the century, designed so that pheasant shooters could switch to the rifle if a wild boar suddenly

OY

Guy N Smith



broke cover. Then they could flick the top lever across, spring up the peep sight and the rear trigger would fire the heavy bullet. Some of the latterday white hunters had used this weapon effectively against big game. If it was capable of knocking down a charging elephant then it would blow a giant crab to hell, Dugan had decided earlier in the day. Provided you hit it in the right place, got your sights on that evil leering face beneath the armour-plated shell, blasted it right between the eyes. The secret lay in getting your bullet beneath the shell, those soldiers on the harbour had been blazing away from an elevated position and their bullets were deflected harmlessly. An odd fluke shot split a shell, rolled a crab over—that was all.

The army had cleared the beaches and declared the shoreline a no-go area around midday. The sightseers, the sensation-seeking crowds that thronged the seafront, were their biggest headache. The police had erected barriers in an attempt to keep them back but Dugan knew the cliff paths and had made a detour under cover of darkness that had brought him right down to the battle zone. It was his only chance of shooting one of the crabs, securing a trophy for himself; there was a ready market for crab meat and these big buggers came by the kilo. And the huge shell would fetch a fortune if it was all in one piece. The British Museum, maybe, or even abroad. If he worked it right, he was onto a gold mine.

Just one 9mm shell, that was all he had because the ammunition for the rifle part of his gun was not readily available. One shot; there would be no time for a second. If his aim was true, fine. If he missed...

He followed the rocks that led down to the tide, bent low because every few minutes that blinding

searchlight beam swung across the beach. The rocks were higher now, the result of an avalanche some years ago that had caused part of the cliffs to spill onto the beach. Here he was hidden from the shore in a world of dark shadows and moonbeam patterns, rock pools draped with seaweed that glistened in the ethereal light. A nightworld that watched and waited. Just the gentle lapping of the waves on the shingle; you had to strain your ears to catch the voice of the soldiers in the distance.

It was here that Dugan stumbled on the body, he recoiled and cried out when his bare foot trod on the human leg in the deep shadows. Not that corpses bothered him unduly, they were all part of a day or night's work when he had been in the RNLI. It was just the surprise of finding one here. The ravenous crabs must have overlooked it. Maybe it was a drowning; a swimmer who had got in trouble and the tide had washed her ashore. It was female, his outstretched probing fingers located small, firm breasts. He grasped an ankle and dragged the corpse unceremoniously into a shaft of moonlight.

The dead girl was beautiful, there was no denying that. Long blonde hair straggled down over her pallid features so that she peeped through the strands at him with wide, dead eyes; a figure that was as near to perfection as God ever made one, her legs close together as if her modesty prevailed even in death. Dugan thought that she was about twenty, maybe even younger.

And at first light the crows and gulls would come to breakfast, squabbling over the eyes, pecking and ripping at the unblemished flesh. Unless, of course, the crabs found her first.

A moment of sadness, pity, that was alien to his nature, overwhelmed him; and then his eyes narrowed thoughtfully. It seemed a sacrilege with one so beautiful; yet she was dead, she wasn't any use to anybody. And if she served a purpose then she wasn't altogether wasted. He pursed his bearded lips. Providence had thrown him a means to kill one of the crustaceans, it would be foolish to spurn manna from the deep.

'Come on, my beauty,' he rested his gun up against a rock and bent to lift her. 'I reckon you can do a very useful job, and afterwards maybe I'll take you someplace where the soldiers might find you before the gulls get to you. Perhaps.'

She was light, he carried her easily across the slippery rocks until he came upon a place—a large rock pool, the moonlight scintillating on its surface—with a shelf set alongside it that might have been made for his very purpose.

Almost reverently he set his burden down upon it, letting her shapely legs dangle in the water, her back resting against a smooth boulder behind her. Her head lolled forwards, there was no way he could prop it up, but it didn't matter. The Sleeping Beauty, he laughed to himself at the thought, waiting for her prince to come. Except that this time the prince would be a regal crab and there was no chance of a crustacean kiss awakening her.

Dugan went back and fetched his gun; he checked that the lower barrel was loaded with the heavy 9mm cartridge. Perfect. He stood surveying the scene he had created; a young girl enjoying a naked midnight bathe, blissfully unaware that the seabed was crawling with hideous evil monsters. He envisaged them attempting to creep up on her, shambling over the rocks, then hurrying when they smelled her sweet flesh. Jesus Almighty, this young girl was the perfect decoy!

"It was here that Dugan stumbled on the body, he recoiled and cried out when his bare foot trod on the human leg in the deep shadows"

Dugan was skilled in the art of decoying his quarry. In the shed behind the tumble-down cottage where he lived alone were sacks of dummy ducks and woodpigeons. So lifelike that from a distance of a few yards you could not tell them from the living birds; certainly the mallard and woodies couldn't, they came to the lure because there just had to be food where their buddies were feeding, the greedy bastards! Often the unfortunate victims didn't even hear the report of Dugan's shotgun, unaware that they had been fooled. And that was how it was going to be with the crabs. Or, hopefully, just one crab; one that had strayed from the others, come ashore in the hope of finding something that its mates had overlooked. And it would find just that, an unwary human, the tender succulent flesh waiting to be shredded and masticated, blood oozing from it like a rare steak.

Dugan settled down facing the dead girl, his back resting against a rock, the gun across his knees. It was a good vantage point up here, he had a field of vision all around, no crab would be able to creep up on him. The sea would reach these rocks, maybe to a depth of a foot or so, a neap tide. Nothing to worry him. In all probability the crabs would come in with it.

His only worry was that there might be a bunch of them, in which case he would have to make a run for the cliff path and hope to beat them to it. No, the main army wouldn't head this way, the cliffs were too steep for them and, anyway, they would be concentrating their attack on the town which was well to his left. Just a straggler, perhaps a youngster that had lost its way.

He found himself staring fixedly at the girl, wishing she was alive because then things would have been different and he wouldn't have given a shit about shooting a crab. So lovely, so erotic in her motionless posture. Was it his imagination or had her legs eased apart slightly? A patch of shadow fell across her lower body and thwarted his voyeuristic pleasure.

She was doing things to him, creating pleasurable sensations. With a deliberate effort, he fought them off. He could not afford to relax his vigilance; he was the hunter, he had no wish to become the hunted.

Listening. Those faraway voices were silent now, just the glare of the seafront lights illuminated the sky over Barmouth and the searchlight arced to and fro. The sea was lapping at the rocks, a gentle soothing sound. Dugan glanced at his wristwatch. 2.45am. The tide would begin to ebb in the next half hour. His hopes began to fade, he recalled those moonlight nights when he had crouched in the reeds fringing the pond up in the mountains, straining his ears to catch that first whistle of ducks' wings. Straining and waiting for hours on end until finally he had to accept that the mallard were not going to fly tonight. Anticipation blending into disappointment, psyched up and then let down.

By 3.30am he knew it was going to be like that now. The tide was ebbing and the crabs had not shown up. He was suddenly aware of his tiredness, almost exhaustedness, once he accepted that his vigil had been fruitless. His dead companion was hidden by the shadows, just a pale blur that might have been anything, not even erotic anymore.

Slowly he stood up and, without glancing back, climbed down onto the wet sand. His decoy had been perfect but she had not lured his

quarry—which was often the way of the hunt. Tomorrow it might be different, but he would not have the girl then.

He thought about taking her back with him, then changed his mind. She was dead, whatever might happen to her body would not make any difference to her. Dragging his feet, he set off in the direction of the hidden cliff path, the gun seemingly a ten kilo weight resting on his shoulder.

And then he saw the crab. It was crouching about ten yards from the cliff face, motionless and watching him. At least, it had to be watching him even though its tiny, hideous face was bathed in shadow because it was facing him. For a moment his heart skipped a beat and an icy tingle ran up the base of his neck and spread into his scalp. Then relief—and he almost laughed out loud. Because it was just a baby, the one he had been willing to appear throughout his long wait on the rocks.

It was no bigger than a terrier, there were maybe bigger normal crabs than this one in the oceans of the world. Dugan swung the gun off his shoulder, pushed the rifle lever across, flipped up the peepsight and took a bead on his intended victim. Just a dark mass, almost hidden against the cliff. He lowered the gun, advanced another two or three steps. This bastard was nothing to be afraid of, his only concern was that the heavy bullet might shatter it and render it useless for either meat or a trophy. But that was a chance he would have to take.

'Hold it right there, pal!' He was still unable to focus its features in the sight, to judge where they were. A range of fifteen yards, no more. He took a trigger pressure.

The report was deafening, the recoil threw him back a couple of feet. His fear was that he might have missed but even as the twin barrels were jerked skywards by the force of the shot, he saw the crab disintegrate, blown apart. The shell shattered, fragments flew in all directions and clinked on the pebble beach like falling shrapnel. The decimated remnants of the crustacean body rolled over. And lay still.

Dugan's first reaction was one of relief combined with euphoria. I got the bastard! Then realisation came with the wafts of powder smoke from the gun in his hands; the futility of it all. A shot-blasted crab corpse that was no use to anybody, the meat strung along the shore for scavenging birds to feast on, the fragmented shell.

He stared; his shoulders bowed and starting to throb from the recoil! Oh Jesus, I fucked it up!

Dimly aware of sounds—the lapping of the tide, seabirds protesting at this nocturnal disturbance—that searchlight trying to pick him out but the jutting headland keeping it at bay. And something else...

Click-click-clickety-click.

Even then he was not fully aware of the advancing crab until it was too late. He tried to flee but his feet refused to move, the gun fell from his grasp and clanked loudly on a stone. He watched the oncoming crustacean with numb disbelief, noting how it towered over him as its pincers reached out for him, a monstrous creature materialising out of the shadows.

And in those last few seconds of life Dugan knew, and cursed in his humiliation. Yelling his frustration as he was lifted aloft, he hated this crab for the ease with which it had lured him to his death, decoyed him with its own dead offspring.



GUY N SMITH started writing in the Fifties but it is his horror novels of the Seventies and Eighties which have found him an ever-growing fan following. His latest books include *The Camp*, published by Sphere, *The Festering from Arrow* and the reissue by Grafton of his third novel, *The Sinner Beast*. Guy is justly renowned for his series of books about killer crabs and *The Decoy*, his second short story for FEAR!, continues this theme.

"The shell shattered, fragments flew in all directions and clinked on the pebble beach like falling shrapnel!"



**"And there
we stood,
face to face:
me, and the
town
madman"**

CARLISLE HUNTER

By Nicola Germain

It was a glorious summer day when I ran into Mr Hunter. He was wearing his grey hat pulled well down to shade his eyes and he was walking along the pavement with his head jutting forwards and his eyes glaring at the ground. His hands were in his pockets. He always seemed to walk with such concentration.

I'd been down to the local shops: Mother, lying in her bed with a virulent summer cold, had wanted painkillers to ease her head. I was walking back up the long, slow hill, looking at the flowers in people's gardens. I glanced up to see if I was about to walk into anything (I had a habit of not looking where I was going) and there, striding straight towards me with his head down, was Mr Hunter. I noticed that there was a fine, hazy layer of dust on the brim of his grey hat, and I thought it was a bit odd, because that must have been the most often worn hat in all existence. No one had ever seen him without it.

He looked up so suddenly that it frightened me — or maybe it was the power of his eyes that startled me. I had never seen eyes like them before. Clear grey, but darkly powerful; they were the colour of the sky at dawn. Or cold steel.

"Hello, Mr Hunter," I said, because I didn't want him to see how much he had scared me.

"You're Emily Marsden, aren't you?" he said.

I stared at him. No one had ever heard him speak before.

"Yes," I said, feeling it was pointless to deny it.

And there we stood, face to face: me, and the town madman.

I remember glancing around in the fear that someone might see me standing talking to him. There seemed to be no one about, but I couldn't be sure. I felt as though I was being hypnotised by the man's eyes; the shadow of his hat brim was like a mask across his face and, through the band of

darkness, those piercing, intent grey-blue eyes stared at me and burned all the way down to my soul. I was seventeen years old; I had never met a madman before.

'Have you been to the shops, Emily Marsden?' he asked, staring at me.

'Yes.' I had a packet of pills in my hand, with the chemist's name written in pale blue on the white paper. I thought of Mother. 'My mother's waiting for me — I have to go now Mr Hunter,' I said.

'Oh,' he said, and took a step towards me, 'do you? Really?' Those eyes, those eyes — I was trapped by him.

'Yes,' I managed to say, 'I really must go.'

'Then may I walk with you, Emily Marsden?' he asked in his softly threatening voice. (They said he had killed a child, some years ago.)

'If you like,' I said quietly; I was afraid of angering him.

As I set off up the hill once more, he turned and began to walk by my side; he was very tall and slender. His shadow seemed so much sharper than my own. I could have sworn that there were grey eyes burning through that quivering, lean shadow.

We walked together up the hill, past neat gardens; it seemed to me that an unusual profusion of bees came humming around us, but Mr Hunter did not wave them away.

'Are you afraid of bees?' he asked me at one point when there were two buzzing around our shoulders.

'No, I don't think so,' I replied. Ahead of me, the road curved to the left, not far round the corner was my house, and safety.

'That's good,' he said, 'they won't hurt you.' He held out his hand and a bee alighted gently in his palm. He laughed then, and I looked at him in sudden fear: he had a ringing, clear laugh, a good laugh, not the sort of laugh I would have expected from a madman. The bee flew off again, and Mr Hunter seemed to remember who he was; he lowered his head again and watched the pavement roll by beneath his feet.

I could see the bend in the road coming nearer, and I began to think of how I could brag to Dan, my brother, that I had walked all the way from town with Mr Hunter, who had made a bee land on his hand, and whose eyes were so piercing that they even shone in his shadow. And, really, he hadn't seemed so dangerous, despite what people had said about him. (Silt the child's throat, in the middle of the night, so they said.)

'Emily Marsden,' he said suddenly, 'won't you come in for a cup of tea with me?'

'Oh, I don't think I should, Mr Hunter,' I said. Afraid of offending him, I added hastily, 'My mother is waiting for me.'

He had come to a halt and, somehow, so had I. We stood on the hot pavement and, across the tongued arc of tarmac road, I realised I was facing his gate and path and house. A shiver ran through me. 'The Madhouse,' they called it. (That was where he had done it; silt the child's throat from ear to ear, in that very house.)

'I really have to go now,' I said.

His grey eyes roamed me to the spot, glittering at me from under the brim of his grey hat. I suddenly remembered my father, before he was killed at Capone, in this day and age was most definitely not right in the head. I stared at Mr Hunter and I thought how he mustn't be right in the head, and I

wondered what that actually meant.

'Emily Marsden,' he said gently, and he put his hand on my shoulder, sending a lance of emotion — I did not know what it was — right through my flesh to my heart, 'it has been so nice to walk with you. Please, won't you come over for a drink with me?' Behind him, his house crouched, dark even in the bright noon sunlight.

His hand was a heavy weight on my shoulder and he held me as surely as if he had chained me to the floor. I could not have moved for anything. I had never been touched by a man before — let alone a madman. Suddenly I wondered if he would take off his hat in the house. That seemed to me to be vitally important; he had never been seen bareheaded before, not by anyone. Maybe I could be the first? I thought of Dan's face, and how his eyes would widen in disbelief when I told him what Mr Hunter looked like without his hat on. As soon as the thought had presented itself to me, I was committed: I had to go through with it and, besides, he was asking me so nicely, his voice so gentle, his hand so warmly heavy on my shoulder, how could I possibly refuse? And mother would most probably be asleep, and I really shouldn't disturb her while she was resting...

'All right,' I said, and his eyes, the colour of cold flint, glittered under the shadow of his grey hat.

He smiled, and I recalled how some of the older people swore he had a wolf's teeth in his mouth. As far as I could see, his teeth were perfectly normal, and I felt a rush of indignation against the gossip-mongers of the town. (They said he had drunk the child's blood. It had been a long time ago.)

We turned and crossed the road, and he led me through the gate and along the narrow twisting path to his house. He took a key from his pocket, unlocked the door, and stood back to let me enter first. As I passed him, I scented something strange, as though the very essence of him, of his madness, had a flavour of its own, and that was what I smelt: the scent of November sky, of snow and steel, a delicate, cold perfume. All too soon it was gone. He entered the house behind me and the door closed on us.

He guided me into his living room, which was neat and clean and orderly. He motioned towards a chair, and I sat down obediently.

'Now then,' he said, 'what would you like to drink, Emily Marsden?'

He still had his hat on. 'Tea please, Mr Hunter,' I said. I nearly asked him to take his hat off, but I restrained myself. He would have to, sooner or later, surely?

'Right,' he said. He smiled at me. 'Please,' he said, 'call me Carlisle.' And off he went into the kitchen.

I sat frozen in my chair: Mr Hunter had a first name! It had never occurred to any of us before that he might have a first name. He had always been Mr Hunter or, more frequently, The Madman. Carlisle — Carlisle Hunter. That in itself was worth coming in here for. I could barely wait to see Dan to tell him.

As I waited for Mr Hunter — Carlisle — to bring in the tea, I glanced around the room. There were photographs on the walls: a man, straight and severe, and a woman with sad eyes and old-fashioned gowns. The photographs made me feel sorry for him. I supposed they must be his parents, and I could hardly bear to think of him sitting here in his living room, looking at the age-

"That was where he had done it; silt the child's throat from ear to ear, in that very house"

faded pictures of his dead parents, while the outside world sniggered as it called him Madman and passed his house. He really didn't seem at all bad to me — and it all happened so long ago, after all.

I fiddled with my paper package of pills and felt how bristly the chair was under my legs, and all around the eyes of dead people stared at me. And here lived Mr Hunter. It was all so sad.

I looked up as he came in. He had taken his hat off. The shock actually made me flush with that strangely piercing emotion again; I hoped the blush didn't show, but anyway the room was dim. I averted my eyes swiftly. There hadn't seemed to be anything actually wrong with his head. 'Not right in the head,' my father had said on many occasions; but if it really wasn't right, then the wrongness must be on the inside, the outside seemed perfectly all right.

He grinned at me as he came in. He was carrying two cups, so, as he handed one to me, I stared at the cup and not at his bare head. Consequently, it was only when he sat in the chair beside mine that I actually looked properly at him and saw what was wrong with his head.

All the way round his forehead there was a line. At first I thought it must just be where his hat had been sitting, but when he moved his head, little fingers of light slid around the mark, and I realised it was a scar. That was the first time I felt afraid of him in all this time. There was something horribly wrong about a wound like that, and I realised why he wore his hat pulled so far down. This disguise made it seem worse — for if he needed to hide it, then there must be some awful story behind such a scar.

'Well now,' he said, sitting back in his chair and sipping at his cup of tea. 'Why don't you —' he turned his head swiftly and stared at me, '— just say what's on your mind?'

'Your head —' I blurted out. His eyes were piercing me; I was breathless with the magnetism of the man.

He smiled and laughed that clear laugh. Then he reached up a finger and touched the sweeping scar which raced around his forehead. 'This?' he said — suddenly I was afraid that he might have more on other parts of his body. I nodded. 'Oh, I had a headache,' he said, and shrugged.

The packet of pills in my hand was heavy as lead. My mother had a headache — she had a bad headache — but no one had suggested cutting open her forehead. Could a head really ache as badly as that?

'Was it... an operation?' I asked timidly. He laughed again. 'You could say that,' he said, and fished his hand into his pocket and pulled out a straight razor with a handle worn smooth to the shape of his hand. The blade was a grin of silver. He sliced the razor back and forth through the air, and I saw an affection in his eyes for the weapon. I realised that I felt no fear — just fascination.

His smile disappeared and he turned to me a face so sad, so serious, that I was taken aback. 'You have turned out to be a remarkably beautiful young woman, Emily Marsden,' he said quietly.

'Oh,' I said, flustered, 'thank you, Mr Hunter.' My face burned with embarrassment.

'Please —' he reminded me, 'Carlisle.'

'Yes,' I said. I did not speak his name; it would have torn me apart.

We fell silent then. I was conscious of all the eyes

in his photographs watching me to see what I did next. I drank some tea, and it tasted good.

'I'm a very lonely man,' he said softly. He was staring into his cup, and the razor was lying on the arm of his chair. I could have reached out my left hand and picked it up, he was that close to me. 'Very lonely,' he repeated.

'I'm sorry.' I could think of nothing else to say.

'It's because I killed that boy, isn't it?' he suddenly cried, springing up from his chair, his eyes burning like vicious stars. The scar he had sliced across his own head glowed white in his fury. His lips were pulled back from his strong white teeth, not wolf's teeth but, somehow, I thought, not quite human either.

Fear speared through me now, sudden and paralysing. I stared up at him. His utter fury was a living force within him; I could see him shaking with anger. His cup had gone flying and an arc of tea stained the carpet. Tea-leaves scattered like small black stars.

'ISN'T IT?' he roared at me. 'I don't know!' I said, frightened, angry, resentful.

'JESUS!' he bellowed. He turned and stormed off in the direction of the kitchen doorway, and then he returned. His hands, I noticed, were curled into tight, knotted fists. His eyes stared at me, full of the mad glitter of stars in space.

How could I escape? I had never felt fear like this before, and it trapped me in the chair, unable to move, and all I could do was regret ever having spoken to him, and mourn for my mother as though it was she who was about to...

Die?

Icy dread swamped me, even as I sat there staring up at his wildness, his frenetic fury. I didn't want to die. I really did not want to die.

'Mr Hunter?'

Nothing. No response. He was showing gritted teeth, waiting for another outburst. His whole body was shaking with contained fury.

'Carlisle?' I tried, hating the shape of his personal name on my tongue.

The grey eyes lighted on me, then I saw them snap into focus, then recognition and raw, blazing fury. He did not speak. The scar had become livid across his forehead.

'Carlisle?' I said again, tentatively.

He flung himself on his knees before me, and the swift scent of his madness hit me.

'I've tried, I've tried,' he was saying, and he looked up, his eyes bored through my eyes and my brain and my soul, and the only emotion I could feel, filling me so that I thought I would burst with it, was love.

I put out my hands and pushed my fingers into his hair, and he laid his scarred forehead on my lap. Through my fingers and the curve of his skull, I could feel how bad his pain was.

He raised his head. 'Look,' he said, and showed me how the razor was somehow back in his hand. 'Look, I've tried, I really have...' And he plucked my hand from where it had been stroking his cold jaw, and showed me how he could draw a line across my wrist with his steely razor, just as he had drawn a line through my heart with his steely eyes.

'Emily Marsden,' he said quietly. He craned his neck so that his face came close to mine and his mouth kissed me gently. I felt the heart-wrenching loneliness of him in that tender, cold kiss.

And Carlisle Hunter held me close while I died.



NICOLA GERMAIN lives in Banbury and works in the local hospital's pathology department. Her interests include rock music and particle physics, but her overwhelming passion is for writing. She has almost completed her first book and is working on two others, together with a series of short stories.

"His lips were pulled back from his strong white teeth, not wolf's teeth but, somehow, I thought, not quite human either"

STATE OF THE ART

BY IAN HARDING

No artist is ever morbid.
The artist can express
everything.

Oscar Wilde

Judith stood at the window watching the approach of autumn in the sky above the city. Night was gathering like a conspiracy of shadows in the streets, and the row of store buildings opposite rose black against the twilight.

How many times during the decade of their marriage had Paul reduced her to this state? So often, that it was routine. She would flee to the bed-sit and cry out her anger into the silence of the room. It would take a week, perhaps two, for peace to enter her mind, then she would begin to spend time at the window and think about what was beyond that glass.

Paul was out there, and so was their marriage, the house, the commitments of work. With the anger gone she could consider her life again, and the way that it hung around fragile things.

Then what became obvious was her need for him. There were times — so many times — when he was intolerable, when even his presence was repugnant. But more often the opposite was true, and her love for him was so desperate, so real, that she could not feel whole without him. At such times her mood would often rub off on him. She would find herself the centre of his attentions; they would talk in whispers as if denying the world a part of their intimacy, and their lovemaking would be a pleasure rediscovered. The rot came with time. She would begin to feel sick with the sweetness of it all.

She was always the one who forged the rift. And once the rift was established, abuse followed: the shouting, the silences. The house became a battleground, the atmosphere was charged and within a matter of weeks she would be forced to flee.



Paul appeared to cope differently. He would lose himself in his teaching and, during the evenings, in his painting while she, locked in her study, would attempt to thrash out the month's article on the portable typewriter. Where he became serene, whistling as he daubed, she fumed — broken nails, correction fluid and all.

In the street below a taxi passed by, its lights cutting through the darkness. In one of the rooms above, a baby began to cry. The room was becoming shadowy, she felt the darkness stealing around her.

Why had they not parted?

Raising her eyes to the sky again and letting her mind drift, she pondered the answer. The good times, though brief, were sufficient to keep them together. They held a kind of magic, a dreamy happiness that kept her rapt.

She picked up an out-of-date and much-thumbed edition of *Vogue* from the side table and flicked the pages absently. Although she was not looking forward to confronting Paul — knowing his mood on her return would be anything but friendly — at least she now felt she had the strength to see the ordeal through, and face whatever consequences arose.

And of course there were her other commitments — the article, for instance. She contributed a monthly review of the city's art scene to the *Hewson Outlook*. Clara, her editor, would insist that she come up with the piece within a fortnight, and Judith hoped she would have enough material to work into something by next week at the outside.

She drew the faded floral curtains across the window, shutting out the night, and made her way through the darkness to the bathroom. She clicked on the light above the sink and studied her face in the mirror. Her cheeks were sallow and her eyes puffy from crying. There was not even a hint of her natural healthy colour. Even her lips were thin and pale, ill-looking. She tried to form a smile, and saw with disgust how yellow her teeth were. She had a brush and paste, and decided that after a shower she would work at them until they gleamed. Then: bed.

Tomorrow she would go home.



The car parked in the driveway was unfamiliar, a gun-metal grey Jaguar, the engine ticking as it cooled. She made her way to the front door, noticing as she passed the vehicle the brief case and mink on the back seat.

After a week of negligence the flower-beds appeared unkempt. The weather had been mild enough to allow the weeds a fling at disruption. She would leave autumn to choke them off.

She pushed the key home and, with a feeling of growing apprehension, stepped into the hallway. The sound of Paul's voice, characteristically raised, imploring even, drifted through from another room. She closed the front door quietly and listened, curiosity unstified. Some of his phrases were more distinct than others; most were indecipherable. She heard, '...rest of my collection upstairs...' and '...another two minutes, please, just another two.'

Judith could not prevent a slight smile as she guessed at the proceedings in the other room, their outcome, and the effect on Paul's pride. At once her apprehension seemed to abate. She realised that nothing had changed; Paul came over in the same predictable way, believing himself an undiscovered genius and refusing to accept that sometimes dreams are never realised. His work was mediocre. As part of her job on the magazine, Judith had visited retired women who picked up oils as a hobby and produced more skilful and stylish pieces. This she would never disclose to him of course.

She was painfully reminded that she had eaten nothing since early the previous evening. Her stomach was cramping in upon its own emptiness. Sooner or later she would be forced to pass through the sitting-room to reach the kitchen and the refrigerator beyond.

Dropping her small suitcase and hanging up her overcoat, she ran a hand through her hair, turned the door handle and entered.

'Ah... Mr and Mrs Glover, this is my wife, Judith,' Paul said.

Judith knew at once that he was nervous and wondered at the pair's purpose here. Paul's hands were pressed together, palm to palm, at his waist. Surrounding him, propped against walls and furniture, was the better part of his entire collection of paintings. He and his guests were standing, as if on ceremony.

'Pleased to meet you,' Judith nodded curtly, hoping to God her smile did not look as false as it

felt. She took a few paces towards the kitchen door. 'Would either of you like a drink? Tea? Coffee?' Mere courtesy.

'Thank you, no,' Glover replied. He was large, red-faced, a bull; copper hair thinning at the temples.

'Nor me,' his wife smiled. She clung to her husband's arm as if she feared a tide would swell at any moment and sweep her from sight.

'Surely, Mr Glover, one cup of tea would not keep you —' Paul began.

Judith snatched the opportunity before it was lost. She made for the kitchen and, with a sigh, reached sanctuary out of eyeshot.

'I am sorry. I must decline. Perhaps some other time. I have a busy schedule today, a programme of appointments.'

'I see. Of course.' But Paul's tone was anything but yielding.

As she eavesdropped on the exchanges in the other room, Judith decided that Glover was probably a gallery curator, perhaps for a private collection, but certainly not local or she would have encountered him long ago. From Paul's manner it was clear that the man's interest in his paintings had at most been fleeting. Glover, the name was familiar.

Paul's cupboard love was as unremitting as ever.

'However, Mr Glover, if you just permit me a moment I could fetch one or two more pieces from my study. I'm sure they'll be —'

Paul watched as, with her eyes averted, Mrs Glover put a hand to her mouth and stifled a yawn. The action was clearly a signal. Her husband shook his head. 'I'm sorry. No.' He smiled briefly and turned to leave.

In the kitchen Judith filled the electric kettle and switched on. From the refrigerator and various cupboards she selected wholemeal bread, Cheddar cheese, lettuce, cucumber, mayonnaise, and cut herself a pile of sandwiches. At the other end of the house she heard Paul offer a spattering of civilities before closing the front door.

He entered the kitchen like a storm.

'Fuck him! Fuck him! Fuck him!' he spat. He took a generous swallow from the tumbler of whisky in his hand and shook his head. Judging by his high colour, Judith saw that it was not his first drink of the day.

'He was a curator, wasn't he?' she asked absently.

She made herself a mug of tea and took it and the food into the sitting-room. Paul followed her like an angry thunderhead.

'That's right. Curator,' he said sharply.

Rather than sit, he chose to stand and fume, surrounded by the paintings which had let him down so miserably. He eyed them as one might eye filth. 'Arthur Reginald Glover, no less.'

'A R Glover?' she asked. 'Crompton's of Birmingham?' So she did know the name, and the reputation.

He sighed. 'No fucking less.'

'My God, how did you get him here?'

'I discovered he was a friend of Patsy's while you were... away —'

The insinuation was unambiguous: her stay in the bed-sit.

Contempt rose, citrus-bitter, in her throat. She continued to eat her sandwich mechanically, holding it with both hands, mayonnaise painting her nails.

— and she promised to introduce us,' he went

"It was time to call on the imaginative part of himself, the part residing somewhere beyond the artist, something much more raw and unrefined"

**"I am a
pioneer,
Halcyon
smiled: dog
eat dog"**

on. 'Things developed from there. We arranged a time over drinks and here he came. Was he interested? Hal not a bit. Not a damn bit.'

At last he sat and stared, eyes smouldering, at one of the paintings at his feet. He had worked the oil into a low ridge of dark hills dwarfed by the colossal bank of a twilight sky that resembled a hearth of orange embers. The title read: *Hardy Fire*.

Unexpectedly, she suddenly felt sympathy for him.

'What do you mean, not a bit?'

Again he sighed. 'Patsy told me he's constantly looking out for new artists. He travels the country picking up fresh material to use at the Birmingham galleries, you see. She said his reputation comes from being innovative. That was her word: innovative. Likes to chop and change, does Mr Glover.' He laughed bitterly. 'He was more interested in the fucking carpet.'

She supposed it was her duty to console him but she could not bring herself to give up her sandwich.

'Hated him the moment the car pulled into the drive. And his fucking wife. She had a mink; did you see her mink?'

Judith nodded.

'I tell you, they couldn't tell the difference between Monet and pigshit. I'll bet money on it. They bought their way into Crompton's, you know. A little money and you have a whole new set of keys. Fucking rotten, eh?' He nodded eagerly to himself. 'To the core, Judith. To the damn core.'

He finished his whisky in a single aggressive swallow and thumped the tumbler down on the coffee table.

'And you know, the man who phoned this morning, he sounded just the same. They claim to know so much, but they can't see how shallow they are themselves. Shame.'

'Man?' she said, rescuing a sliver of cucumber from her skirt. 'What man?'

'He phoned this morning, asking for you.'

She looked up. 'Me?'

'That's right. Name was Anderson or something. He left a number.'

'What did he want?'

'How should I know? He asked for you, didn't he? Said call him back. Sounded pompous to me. Like Glover really. And that wife of his. Christ! Did you ever see such a sight?'

Lloyville Public School
Lower Arch Walk
Barnetigh
Somerset

Surname: Anderson
General Form Tutor: Mr Frederick Logan
Forename(s): Carl Gustavus
Date of Birth: 1/8/31

It is with great regret that I must inform you that, despite your son's obvious academic brilliance, he has been unable to maintain the demanding standards set by this establishment; standards by which we hope to instill in our pupils an iron-founded sense of responsibility and maturity. I must hasten to inform you that this disappointing development is most certainly not because of any lack of zeal on the part of the staff here. I feel it my duty, as the overseer of all the pupils, to speculate as to the reason for this slump in performance, and find myself reaching the conclusion

that, while in attendance here, your son has displayed a curious, and, we feel, irredeemable change in character. It is a change which we have most clearly manifest during his senior years here; and a change which, it must be added, seems not for the general good of the individual concerned. Though your son's yearly grades at this institution have always been considerably above average, they nevertheless reflect a steady term by term depreciation which, my tutors inform me, mark both a waning interest in and commitment to his work. (I have heretofore enclosed your son's Latin grades taken every term of his five years here. There are a mere three instances, taking in the full sweep of marks, where he has bettered himself, i.e. attained a higher grade than the one preceding it. I am sure you will be as shocked as we are, and I can only offer my sympathies.)

His chances of entering an Oxbridge establishment have therefore been dashed. We pass on our deepest commiserations, and can only suggest that he apply for an alternative which offers, above all, a comprehensive degree scheme. I can only hope that a change of environment will jolt him from this most unproductive of reveries. I further warn him that such a decline in application can only deliver him finally and violently into wastage.

Despite all, my best wishes,

Blake N Harris

Headmaster

Postscript: Though it should in no way represent a glimmer of hope for your son, you may be interested to know the sentiments of a further member of staff, Philip Newman, our art and craft tutor. He describes your son's abilities in this field as exceptional, unparalleled by any other pupil in his experience, and goes on to say that he will be taking a selection of your son's pieces with him to Europe later this year. It must be borne in mind that art remains a minor and relatively obscure practice and in all honesty cannot, under any circumstances, constitute a future career for the boy. In this respect then, 'talent' such as this represents a brief spark for your son in a general prognosis of darkness.

B.N.H.

The article, despite two hours at the typewriter, remained stubbornly without shape or consistency.

Judith rose from her desk and, with a sigh of despair, took off her glasses and laid them aside. She suspected that the problem was a distinct lack of material. Except for a new art and craft shop with an upstairs gallery opening soon in the city, she had very little else to comment on. It seemed this month's piece would be a rehash of old news coaxed up to date. If the worst came to the worst and Clara took her up on the matter, she would explain the situation and cross her fingers in the hope that the check would still drop through the letterbox.

She looked at the slip of paper on which Paul had scrawled a name and number. She would have given a great deal at that moment to have commitments other than inside the office walls. Perhaps the paper was her key to release. She took the name and number to the phone in the sitting-room and dialled.

Seven, eight rings, then: 'Hello.'

Quick as thought, Judith pictured the man: of late middle age, cultured, worldly.

'Hello,' she said. 'Mr Anderson?'

'That's right.'

'My name's Judith Haines. I believe you were

trying to contact me?"

"Oh yes, that's right."

The man seemed hesitant, as if unsure how best to voice his intentions.

"I really won't take up much of your time, Ms Haines. I understand you have a column in the Outlook — you're a kind of scout for city talent, yes?"

"In a manner of speaking."

"The point is that I'd appreciate it if you would view my own gallery. It's private, of course, and all my own work. I hope eventually to be able to live from my art alone, you see. I'm sure you now how wholesale an artist's passion can get." He attempted a quiet laugh, but sliced it short as if he feared ridicule. "With a little publicity I hope to make it an attraction, so to speak."

"Which is where my column comes in?"

"Exactly."

"You are based in the city?" she asked.

"Yes. Layside. I've spent a great deal of money moving into a warehouse there. I have a comfortable apartment and all my paintings under one roof. What more could a man desire?"

"What indeed?" Her smile, though involuntary, was not an easy one.

"What more could a man desire? Was he an obsessive?"

"Then what's your decision?"

Her thoughts were scattered. "I'm sorry?"

"Do I qualify as 'city talent' or not?"

"Oh, I see. Well, my policy is always to begin with a precursory viewing, as it were. I can hardly set you down in the Outlook without having seen any of your work."

"Of course not."

"All we need decide on is a time. When would suit?"

"Any time is perfectly convenient. I'm home all hours... painting."

"How about in an hour?"

"So soon?" He seemed taken aback.

"Actually," she sighed, "my current article is going terribly. For some reason this month I am at a loss for new material. You really are a ray of hope."

The image of her plight evidently amused him. This time his laughter was unrestrained.

"Very well then. An hour. I live at Number One, Piltown Vale, Layside. My name's on the plaque. I'll be expecting you."

I am a pioneer, Halcyon thought as he watched the light play along the blade of the scalpel. There was a single, infinitely more delightful thing that could adorn a blade, and that was blood. When he made the first incision, then there would be delight aplenty. This he considered as he crossed the tiles to the trolley and placed the instrument tenderly into the tray. He smiled brightly as the idea caught his imagination. On the trolley the tools of his trade were arranged. And his trade was art.

I am a pioneer, Halcyon affirmed, rolling gloves over his fanned fingers and snapping them over his wrists.

He wheeled the trolley across to a aluminium table in the middle of the study and pulled a cord which clicked on a bank of strip-lights.

Garish white light, clinically harsh, fell on all the surfaces. As if in response to the sudden

brightness, there was movement and rattling from the corner of the study.

He experienced an exquisite mixture of feelings — both trepidation and anticipation — and he knew that at any moment he would begin to make demands on himself, demands on his skill with the instruments, demands on his imagination. For Halcyon there was no joy but that of creation, and this was a joy which transported him above and beyond the ability of all other artists.

All.

And he realised what it was to be privileged, to be blessed with unique skills which, combined, produced such masterly play and invention, such a weave of themes, such paradoxes.

I am an explorer, he thought, as he crossed to the rattling cages and pulled aside the plastic sheeting. I chart new territory.

He injected a sedative into the haunch of the first pup and carried it lovingly, in both arms, to the table. It was not long before the animal had calmed down and was asleep. With equal care he fetched the second animal and placed it next to the first, letting the drug from the needle bring it peace.

And now: the dilemma.

He closed his eyes, feeling nothing but the dogs' warmth and palpitations beneath the skin-gloves covering his hands. It was time to call on the imaginative part of himself, the part residing somewhere beyond the artist, something much more raw and unrefined. Faced with the dilemma of being unable to proceed without inspiration, his unconscious unfailingly coughed up gems.

"Two male spaniels," he said, delivering the words and their picture associations into his mind. "Two dogs..."

In less than a minute, he had it; he smiled. Next he called to life bits of machinery of his own design which had lain dormant and starved of electricity almost since they had been put together. He clipped a tiny bumble-bee microphone to his lapel and, inclining his head, spoke down into it. At once a platinum jib, voice-activated, disengaged itself from the ceiling and swung down within reach. Another word, and a mechanism of interlocking blades began to chomp the air at the end of the metal arm.

He sheared both pups naked.

Beneath the fur the dogs' true anatomies were revealed: scrawny, pale and mottled, more crayfish than canine. The job done, the jib rode the air back to the ceiling and shut itself off.

Now that inspiration was his for the taking he would work ceaselessly until the task was completed. He set to it, giving a sleight-of-hand performance, wielding two scalpels with ambidextrous precision and calling in the help of his mechanical minions via the microphone. During the eight hours it took he was utterly lost to himself, interrupted neither by hunger nor toilet nor fatigue. As the work went on he wallowed in the buzz of euphoria it brought him. In his mind there was no real contest between sex and surgery, the blade he used here was of stainless steel.

Dog eat dog.

Three simple syllables: but how many nuances for the artist to play on?

Simple words yielding infinite delight.

Dog eat dog.

He busied himself with his blades and his needles.

For Halcyon the sheer success of the venture was enough to have him in a palsy of awe. But

there was no denying the liberties he had taken with the anatomies of the dogs. There was no denying the violence of violation; the way their bodies now obeyed new rules, rules Halcyon and his machines had worked against nature. What now had life was no longer natural, would have been spat out of the world as surely as rotted meat from the mouth had they been conceived elsewhere.

But they were in Halcyon's care. Halcyon's offspring, they had the equal of a mother's devotion, and more.

I am a pioneer, Halcyon thought: see how they live!

What might once have been separate was now a purpose shared. Flesh and metal fused and hoisted and revolved — intricacy in motion — in its own space from the ceiling. What was superfluous to this existence had been efficiently sliced away. The earless, limbless sacs that now perpetually turned, positioned haunch to maw in a circling hunt for nutrition, had even — despite their wounds — forgotten the art of bleeding.

The dogs shared a single stomach, the spare had been unseated and flushed away. Teased from the body of the first pup, this shared stomach was supported in its own wire displaying harness beneath them. What each gnawed from the other's flank, in an awful ceaseless hunger, they both ultimately shared. On and on they revolved, unable to voice complaint at or even see the perpetrator of the crime they had become; their faculties unmade by blades. On and on in their shared blindness, shaved snouts filled with the sweet, enticing aroma of their fellow's flayed side. On and on, their frantic, greedy motions offset an elaborate system of counteracting weights that kept them spinning, always spinning.

Halcyon, his instruments sluiced and disinfected, was now at leisure to observe. His gaze swept from one end of the display hall to the other. In his entire cluttered menagerie of work, he knew — listening to the place's echo of sounds, tickings and bleatings and scratchings — there was nothing comparable with this.

I am a pioneer, Halcyon smiled: dog eat dog.

She had time on her hands. It was not yet one and the tour commenced in an hour, so she drove to the park and sat for a time listening to a classical music station on the radio. Mozart flowed by, then Grieg, then Bach, as if accompanying the stately migration of clouds over the artificial lake. It was soon time to make the journey back across town. She met the challenges of the lunch-hour traffic with something very nearly approaching nerve.

The place was not difficult to find. Leyside was an ailing industrial pocket on the west side of the city; the buildings that were not already demolished were teetering. It was no surprise to Judith that the Anderson residence was as distinct as a jewel in the mud, despite being just one warehouse in a row of others lining the road. There was no sign of dereliction at Number One: the bricks were sound, the wood vital with varnish.

She paused at the door to read the plaque: Mr C G Anderson Esq, Artist. She guessed, though her assumption was groundless, that he lived alone.

She paused a moment longer, considering... The

thought had not occurred to her before, but was this scenario not a little threatening? Here she was about to enter the house of a stranger in a part of town where screams would go unheard. She believed herself streetwise enough not to take unnecessary risks, yet here she was, almost in defiance of those instincts. But there was, was no warning sounding in her skull as there often was. If there was a whiff of threat about this set-up then it was lost to her. No: she trusted her first impressions of the man — cultured and worldly.

The smile of greeting was a contrast to the man's austere telephone manner and her suspicions flew clean out of her head.

'Ms Haines, come on in.'

He addressed her with all the warmth and implied generosity of her late grandfather. There was even a hint of jocularity in the manner of his dress: pale magenta cravat at throat, pastel blue waistcoat with gold watchchain, pale grey pinstripe trousers, leather slippers.

His brief handshake was steady and gentle.

'Sorry to be so — er — informal.'

'Not at all.'

He held the door wide. 'Please, come in.'

'Thank you.'

She stepped into a cool vestibule. The plainness of the decor — cream floor tiles, mock Persian rug, small mahogany table with a vase and spray of dried grasses and teasels — surprised her.

'It's a sultry day, isn't it?' he ventured, crossing to a door in the opposite wall and indicating the way.

'It is, yes.'

He motioned her through the door and along the plain hallway at the end of which three more doors presented themselves. From behind she could watch him without feeling intrusive. His thinning hair, steel grey, was oiled flat against his scalp. His movements were those of a much younger man; he walked loosely, easily, elegantly.

He opened the door and ushered her in ahead of him, saying: 'This is the gallery hall. My pride and joy, you could say.'

For the first time since crossing Anderson's threshold she faced an impressive sight. His paintings were hung at regular intervals along the length of each wall. There were perhaps sixty, all told.

'And my exhibits...' He motioned with a hand.

She went eagerly from one to the next, feasting.

The perusal lasted two hours. At the end of the tour Judith thought her head fit to burst with the profusion of colour and images she had seen. The works were chiefly watercolour, though there was an occasional gouache, often of more sombre a tone and subject. She felt it a heartbreaking shame that Anderson had not already achieved wider viewing, for these paintings were worthy of the best of the galleries. How had he managed to remain hidden? She had never seen such variety. At one moment — as with *Petal Lady* — tender to a stroke, and the next — with *Danse Macabre* — lamentation and despair fit to rival hell. And yet more. She had never before seen such invention; seascapes of lava, cloudscape of boiling blood, animal nudes made erotic, natiivities made threatening.

There were beautifully rendered paradoxes: cherubs wizened, fossils made youthful. There were imitations of many schools — Flemish, Fauvist, Der Blaue Reiter — and combinations of these which taxed her expertise and befuddled her brain. And there were more conventional subjects

**"Timber and
bone and
flesh made a
delightful
contrast"**

— landscapes, portraits — yet done with such precision and panache that she felt nothing but awe. She saw a comparison with poetry — a few words implying so much — as she picked out the course of individual brush strokes which seemed so profound.

It was a delight, then, at the end of this experience to hear Anderson say:

'Perhaps it's a trifle forthright of me, but I have a watercolour I would very much like you to take with you. You might like to — how shall I say — pass it around?'

It might have sounded forthright from another, but not from the lips of this man, this... paragon was the word that suggested itself to her.

'It would be a pleasure.'

More than a pleasure, an honour.

'Give me a moment,' he said, 'I'll fetch it.'

He disappeared from sight through a doorway. Between handle and jamb she caught sight of a settee, lampstand, occasional table and of Anderson stooping between them. He returned with a prepared package wrapped in brown paper. 'It's called *Entropy Child*.'

'*Entropy Child*,' she echoed, reverentially.

Paul, she had to admit, was in a better mood on her return. She was sure this had much to do with the dwindling level of whisky in the bottle. He sat in a contemplative silence with Anderson's watercolour on his lap.

Judith busied herself in her study, roughing out an improved plan for the article, waiting for Paul other react. *Entropy Child* was just as exceptional as the other pictures. She had unwrapped it in her car after exchanging farewell civilities with the artist. In a stupor of wonder, her eyes had roved back and forth across the colours, discerning from the apparent chaos a subtly worked structure showing the bleak and melancholy features of a young boy as he surveyed what appeared to be a wilderness, a wasteland, a derelict world.

On studying the picture, she suddenly knew what it was like to live without hope. The picture, in its despair, filled in the spaces of her own experience. More significantly, it made her wonder at Anderson's background; were he and the haunting/haunted boy one and the same? Why had he kept the picture away from mere casual viewing in the gallery? Was it because it was more than a little personal? But if that was the case, would he really have offered it up to her, a stranger, in an attempt to spread his name amongst the ranks of the already established?

Her thoughts spiralled on as Paul, picture in hand, entered the room. He was clearly as impressed as she:

'It's fantastic. It's —'

His voice was a carefully crafted neutral.

He's envious, she thought, and: I'm enjoying this.

'I know.'

'Who is he?' He placed the picture on her desk and took a pace back to regard it.

'A bachelor. Lives on his own, I think. Probably wealthy.'

'What about his background? Was he an only child?'

'I've no idea.'

Paul picked the picture up again and held it close to his face, peering at it.

'It appear to have been signed...' he said, tilting it towards the light.

She was about to admit that she had been so overawed by Anderson's gallery that she had failed to notice a single signature.

'Oh?' she said.

'No... wait a minute... something...'

The mark must have been minute judging by the way Paul squinted at it.

'Is it signed?'

'Yes,' he said, throwing her a puzzled glance.

'Haleyson.'

The stray looked up into the soft eyes of the man. He was smiling, she saw, and opening his mouth to form words. She wondered in an absent way as she plaited her doll's hair what those words might be. But as soon as she began to think, her mind took her reluctantly back home and she saw, and then heard, other words crossing the sitting-room between her mother and father. And she felt those words hurting and stinging and drawing tears.

'I was wondering if you could help me?' the old man seemed to say. 'Could you?'

The girl was surprised to see a car pass by. This was a part of the city few people had business with. She applied this knowledge to the old man and grew suspicious of him. Yet there was something in his stance that was far removed from her father. And her father, she knew was false. She knew that her mother would never deceive, even if it was certain pain otherwise; her mother often talked about 'principles'.

The man came closer and settled on his haunches with a tiny hiss of pain. He used the concrete step on which she sat as a support to keep his balance. Nearby, a carton skidded into the road, teased along by the wind. The wind was indeed playful today; it threw dust in their eyes and ran gleefully away along the pavement.

'You see, I'm new to the city —'

That would explain his choice of district.

'— and I really need some provisions, some food and things. So I was wondering if you'd direct me to a supermarket.'

She mused for a moment, running over the street geography in her mind.

'No supermarkets around here.'

He responded to this information with a smile.

'A shop perhaps?'

'There's Kerry's. That's a newsagent. You can buy crisps and ice-creams and things in there.'

His smile broadened. 'Ice-cream?'

'That's right,' she nodded, 'and crisps and sweets.'

He seemed to hesitate.

'I know it's a great deal to ask,' he said, 'but — well — could you possibly show me the way? I'd be more than grateful.'

He was so unlike her father; in age, in the way he talked. Could you possibly was, she was sure, an alien phrase to her father.

'Yes, I will.'

'Thank you.'

She rose and led the man enthusiastically, as though he were blind, along the pavement into the wind.

Kerry's, he said after buying them both an ice-cream, did not have much of a selection. He asked her if she would accompany him in a taxi to the

"Here was an effigy of Hitler woven from barbed wire"

**"The figure
had been
spread-
eagled and
crucified on
a wooden
Star of
David"**

shopping centre to find a supermarket so that he would not go hungry. Licking ice-cream from her top lip she nodded eagerly, and he smiled.

In the taxi he asked her name.

'Lorna,' she replied.

'Do you know something, Lorna?'

'No. What?'

'You're very pretty. Pretty as a flower, actually.'

His smile grew broader, brightening and seaming his cheeks, as an idea — perhaps his best yet — formed in his mind.

The deadline had been met, the article published, and Judith — much relieved — had received nothing from her editor but her check.

When the second phone call came, the first snow of the year was settling and the suburbs were swiftly filling with a drifting white quiet. This time, with a fortnight until the next deadline, Judith found herself with a much better selection of material from which she could choose the most newsworthy of stories. She thought back to the previous month and remembered how Anderson had been a lifeline. Her thoughts turned to his gallery and the watercolour still in her care. It was then that the phone rang.

She lifted the receiver.

'Hello?' she said.

'Good morning, Ms Haines. It's Carl Anderson. I'm sorry it's been such a while.'

'I've been a trifle busy,' he elaborated. 'I've a host of new projects underway. Actually, I telephoned to thank you for your kind words in the article. Though I must say I felt your praise was — how can I say? — perhaps a little too lavish for comfort. I should have thought someone of your —'

Her experience gave her an edge. She was familiar with this speech. It sprang from one of two things: modesty or belligerence. And she knew that this man was tenderly urbane and refined to the point of passivity, so she discounted the latter assumption.

'Mr Anderson, I assure you that whatever I said in the article was not without justification. My praise has been echoed by a number of people who have seen *Entropy Child*, my husband included. Your work is worthy of a wider audience, and it is certain to attract a great deal of attention.'

His tone became less accusatory. 'Then you don't flatter?'

'No, Mr Anderson. It is not my job to flatter. To offer an opinion, maybe.'

'Then again, I can only offer you my deepest thanks.'

'Did you mention new projects?' she enquired, changing the subject.

'Indeed,' he replied keenly, and cleared his throat. 'You see, I kept a little secret from you on your first visit. I was already developing something entirely new. And now I feel I want to share my discoveries.'

'I'm sorry?'

'I beg your pardon.' He paused. 'I'll try to explain. Each new item I work on — be it a painting or a sculpture — I consider a quest, if you like, into unknown territory. It is up to me to resolve the venture using — art equipment aside — simply time and the imagination. On return... that is, on completion, I often discover something

a particular method of creation, or a nuance of colour, or a subject... what you will. I believe I have made a

number of such discoveries during these most recent ventures and would like to share them with you.'

Judith was baffled and intrigued by this switch to the metaphorical. She had no idea why Anderson would want to disclose the mechanics of his invention to her, but she desperately wanted to see more; she had lost count of the instances when she had wished herself back in the master's gallery, feasting once more on the profusion of images, colours, sensations.

'I would love to,' she said.

He paused — so typical of his manner — as he pondered.

'Would you really?'

'Of course,' she affirmed. 'When?'

'Tomorrow, perhaps. How about mid-afternoon? That's if it's convenient.'

'It is.'

Another pause.

'Very good. I'll look forward to it.'

And the conversation ended there.

She had not been so deliciously excited since Christmas Eve as a child.

It was time for trauma.

And Judith was as unsuspecting as the child taken in by the indulgences of a stranger. As she stepped across Anderson's threshold, smiling the Archfiend in the face as she did so, it seems as if her better instincts had deserted her.

This time he took her to a much grander hall. From the moment he motioned her through the doors she was a child again, powerless to act but at the command of her guide, learning to see and hear anew, yielding to the lure of forbidden sights.

If she had feasted on the offerings in the smaller gallery then here she aspired to gluttony, devouring the sights with boundless appetite. And all the while Anderson's commentary ran uninterrupted at her side.

— an earlier work, that one. I spent many years looking to the masters as models — a pastiche of this, a pastiche of that. I was infatuated with Rembrandt for a long time... I'm sure you recognise the source of this piece?'

She did. She faced a hulking bull's carcass, strung up on a wooden cross-beam contraption, beheaded, flayed, unseamed from the neck to anus. The pungent reek of meat filled her head. Timber and bone and flesh made a delightful contrast. Rembrandt's *The Slaughtered Ox* had been realised down to the minutiae. She turned away, salivating.

It was as though, piece by crafted piece, she progressed into fantasy. It could well have been dreamland. It was a far cry from Paul and his world of mediocre art and petty jealousies.

She watched entranced as an android, an intricate thing of coppery filaments, weaved a clone out of its own components, stripping itself of existence to do so. The process was taken up by the partly-completed second which finally made itself whole only to begin the cycle again, forming another out of itself.

'The theme of sacrifice has interested me for as long as I can remember,' Anderson said.

But he failed to articulate the ceaseless toil of the

thing they watched. Even now it pulled something tiny and glinting from its knee and patiently inserted it into the skull of its offspring.

There was something painfully inevitable here, she thought, something relevant to herself, yet she was unable to place it.

They moved on, passing a white and towering sculpture, the subject of which was unclear save that it seemed to share common elements with da Vinci's contraptions and with the human skeleton.

Item by item, Anderson's sorcery increased in skill and insight. But at the next exhibit her breath stalled in her throat. Something in her mind, something small and unimaginably distant, stirred as if in protest to this fresh sight. Perhaps already a part of herself grieved for her loss of reason. And her reason would have said, quite simply: scream.

In the face of Anderson, this madman: scream.

At all costs: scream.

But she had lost her reason and in its place there was a child with a passion to see more.

Here was Darwin, his face fused with that of an ape, in the manner of Siamese twins. The human likeness was bewitching. The expression on the evolutionist's wax — or possibly latex — features was at once triumphant and haunted. Judith believed that Anderson too knew what it was to be a pioneer.

'No artist is ever morbid,' Anderson quoted. 'The artist can express everything.'

'I'm sorry?' It was only with the greatest effort that Judith was able to free her eyes from her study of the dual anatomies.

'Wilde,' Anderson continued. 'You know, despite all the controversy, all the blight from Cleveland Street, Wilde shone with a knowing. He could embrace the plight and doom of the individual shaken senseless in the teeth of society.'

They moved on again, and Anderson's voice became tense. But Judith considered it an honour to be allowed to listen; it was not often that lectures were to be had from idols.

'I don't want to be celebrated,' he said. 'I have never wanted a wider audience than the one I have now. I suppose in a way I deceived you. I have always found the idea of publicity abhorrent — but it fitted into the scheme of things. I needed devotion, Judith; namely, yours.'

She had her wits about her sufficiently to voice a question.

'Why?'

He touched her arm. 'What better devotee than a critic of art? It's so —' he smiled, '— fitting.'

Here was an effigy of Hitler woven from barbed wire. It was a masterly display of skill. Somehow Anderson had coaxed and bullied the barbs into stunning detail, down to epaulettes and moustache. The figure had been spread-eagled and crucified on a wooden Star of David.

'Builder of a nation? Yes. A Messiah? Perhaps. Descendant of David?'

For an answer, he shook his head.

At their feet there was what appeared to be a pile of twisted metal. Judith tried to read order into the chaos and failed, though many of the shapes — domes and curves and plains — seemed itchy familiar.

At some undetected command there was movement on the floor and a musical tinkling as the shaped metal rose, hoisting itself up before them as if on ceremony. Judith thought she heard the faint gasp and whistle of pistons. Two human skeletons forged from shining steel stood swaying

before them. Gender indiscernable, they held hands, one the clone of the other. Then, eye-sockets glinting and fleshless mouths grinning almost in mockery of the conventions of bone, they began to waltz, cheekbone to cheekbone, hands clasped, phalanges clacking on the tiles. One touched its teeth against those of the other in a semblance of a kiss. The other responded, returning the gesture with greater fervour. And so the passion escalated until one of them ventured to open its mouth. Anderson had made them aspire to touch and feeling. Tongues, fully fleshed, emerged, entwined, and spun between them in a stringy web of mingled juices, looped and beaded.

He asked: 'Should the dead merely, because of their state, be denied all pleasure?'

It was a concept she had not considered before. Now, watching the wrought skeletons at play, she decided Anderson's was a perfectly valid argument.

He watched her watching them.

He had reduced her systematically, exhibit by exhibit, from the rational adult to the child, from the sublime to the ridiculous. Though he found the expression distasteful, it was apt: she was eating from his hand. Now he could see the finale through, and probably more besides. At this last thought he smiled and motioned her almost impatiently on.

'It's been an age since I last read Freud, you know.'

He knew it was merely a matter of humouring the woman now — of coaxing the grizzled child along with promises of sweets. Not that she lacked enthusiasm; she passed eagerly from one sight to the next, listening attentively to his every syllable. He found it amusing to strip her of a piece of her mind at each of the works they passed, to leave a portion of her behind, almost like an offering to his genius.

'Freud. No, I've never read any.'

He noticed that she had forgotten the courtesy of looking at him when speaking.

'You must,' he said. 'Some of his theories are — well — interesting, as you can see...'

'Oh yes.'

It was a family, at sexual congress, a sculpture of knotted bodied and sundered taboos. Here, in a dizzying circle of outlawed pleasures, mother opened to son, daughter to father. The quartet's hips and genitalia were an indiscernable, married core of meat, from which sprouted the torsos: women listing backwards, boy eager to please, man sternly working, girl agog with delight. They shared a bath of sweat.

'Shall we move on?'

'Is there more?'

'You know there is.'

Then: the final act of supplication. Judith reached out and took Anderson's hand. 'I'm not sure the name Halcyon suits you,' she said suddenly. He was momentarily startled, then a smile of understanding made his already buoyed spirits airborne. It was a child's nature to speak its mind.

'Don't you?'

'No.'

'Tell me why?'

She thought for a moment, her head on one side, finger at mouth. It was almost as if she acted the youngest, and acted ineptly at that.

'I don't... know...'. She seemed troubled.

'Tell me,' he said, his voice soft and measured.

"Tongues, fully fleshed, emerged, entwined, and spun between them in a stringy web of mingled juices, looped and beaded"

'Halcyon... It doesn't seem right for this —'

Her gesture covered the sweep of hall.

'Doesn't seem right for what?'

He was frankly tiring of the outsized infant.

What was the use of entertaining a child when he had work to do? Important work. He held her hand more firmly in his own and led her on. Her eyes went left and right, her head his way and that, so as not to miss a single sight. He had to admire her persistence — he had wrongly assumed that children grow bored quickly.

As is often the case, our most insightful analysis is produced by the dream state. Likewise the rise out of madness can offer a clarity of vision, as it finally did for Judith. Her inability to reason was the result of her inability to shift perspective. Sanity had forsaken her so that she might shrug free the tethers binding her to convention, to conscience. It was part of Halcyon's plan that madness might allow her to appreciate his work. So when she stood and beheld this new, spinning, mewling, frantic display suspended overhead, something stirred and beckoned her back from the abyss. She began to see this man for what he really was.

Her feeling of protest enabled her to mouth, inaudibly: 'No...' At last a denial, however simple, of this seemingly endless cavalcade of horrors.

Oblivious and impatient to begin work, Halcyon ushered her away from the dogs — still caught in their spiralling hunger — and on to, abruptly, a flower garden.

It was only as the sudden profusion of scents filled her head that she realised how bland the air had been till now. She was treading soft earth, cropped grass, with flowers — open their widest as if beneath a midsummer sun — all around her. For a dreaming moment she was transported back to her grandparent's farm cottage in Devon where she had spent most of each summer holiday. And here now were the buttercups next to forget-me-nots, marigolds and irises. All Halcyon's other creations paled in comparison with these.

She heard the child before she saw her. The girl was singing. A narrow grass path brought Judith to a clearing. Here the girl knelt, looking up as if awaiting her, her tiny hands working involuntarily at length of daisy-chain.

The child sang:

'In my garden, sir, build me a tower

That I might be with you 'lone an hour —'

There was nothing here the equal of this sight.

Judith woke up to her instincts with all the rapidity of fleeing a nightmare. For the second time she felt herself preparing a scream — but she was mute.

And the girl sang:

'And when you have done, sir, cover up my sight
For we cannot lie and wait for morning light'
Halcyon was at her side, admiring his work.

'Wonderful, isn't she?' he said. 'Pretty as a flower.'

It all came clear.

Suddenly she saw him as nothing more than a butcher with manners and a passion for logic that was unflinching. He had genius: yes. But the kind which is better left undiscovered so that subsequent brain-children — as the one before her irrefutably was — remained unrealised.

Beneath the glare of the lights, she saw with horrific clarity that he had opened up the top of the girl's head. Her pale scalp had been teased back in four wide flaps, and a large scalloped

window placed in her skull. In the pallid convolutions of her brain poppies grew, the colour and vitality of which Judith had never before seen. Their roots were buried as deep, surely, as the shoots were tall, making a network through the child's head, through her knowledge and enquiry wit and wisdom.

Opened and vibrant, the girl herself resembled a bloom; such, it was dear, was Halcyon's work.

And she sang:

'If when you have done this, sir, I will die content I will know from your actions you were Heaven-sent'

Judith was opening and closing her mouth like a fish in an attempt to vent the scream. But nothing emerged. It was as if she had forgotten the workings of her own throat.

Of all times: now!

Halcyon turned and saw that something was wrong. For a start she was not on her knees with adoration. It was not awe that lit her eyes. His plan, his wonderful plan, was coming undone at the seams. But his machines would not let him down. They gathered about him now, his metal minions displayed their blades and needles, their hooks and clippers, barbs and drills. He had programmed them all and as a result they knew his tastes well where flesh was to be worked, knew his whims and how best to reach his desired ends.

Judith was held by the gaze of the infant. How much suffering? She thought only of suffering.

The girl sang:

'Kiss me gently, build me a tomb Cover me, sir, with a poppy bloom.'

Judith felt a pain — sharp and immediate — in her left shoulder and in her right upper arm. She felt the machines whipping up her hair in a wind. At last the sound of her own scream came, fit to open her own head with its volume.

'No! No! No!'

Halcyon's hands buried themselves like nesting birds in his thinning hair and his face appeared at once to age a decade. The thought of failure brought him to his knees.

Judith's muscles thrummed, wound tight as springs, galvanised for flight by horror or pain or both. There was colour at the periphery of her vision. She turned and saw blood glueing her blouse to her skin. A whirring machine above her head took what felt like a substantial tuft of hair out of her scalp, the sound in her ears was like tearing cardboard. She looked up to see a sphere from which dangled a pair of bloody pincers, held aloft by clacking rotors. This busied itself about her, keeling and dipping, and was joined, she was dismayed to see, by another.

Pincers flashed; blood welled from her cheek. From relative stillness there was a sudden commotion. There were noises and movements on all sides now, closing in with a purpose.

**"Wonderful,
isn't she?,"
he said.
'Pretty as a
flower'"**



Then, she ran. She fled the flower garden and the sweet gaze of Halcyon's prize bloom. To get away. Anything to get away.

'No! No!' This time the shouts came from Halcyon.

Judith's shin connected with something solid and the bone ground and broke. Caught by surprise, she went down on her face amongst toppling equipment. It could have been raining blood, it splattered the tiles in such profusion.

'No! No!'

Halcyon's screams made her curious and she struggled to observe his traumas and pleadings. But before she had levered her elbows beneath her and raised her throbbing head to look, she thought: the machines. No flight of imagination could have put such sights in her head. Indeed, if ultimately it was her imagination which had birthed such scenes it was a realm better left unmappped.

His automations — and there were many — were gathered around him, as a family around a new born infant. Something about the intimacy between man and machines was distasteful, their proximity love-close. They were infatuated, these machines, with his hands and skin and eyes. They crowded him, and because of their numbers it was impossible to see what work they intended to do.

But she guessed what it might be.

His creations were now becoming creators. Imbued with Halcyon's passions and skills they themselves perceived — and were about to realise — the final paradox: the artist becoming art.

It was not possible, surely, that they had access to such insight. Where could their invention spring from? Could circuit boards dream?

Yet here they were, busying themselves, jostling for room to operate, whirring and clicking almost as if they felt pleasure in their forged hearts. Chemicals were pooling across the floor, leaking from phials and fractured glass flasks. Heedless of the obvious risks, Judith manoeuvred herself through the spillages. As a safety precaution, the warehouse had been fitted with a fire door and it was towards this that she headed — no more than five yards ahead. Sobbing, she floundered wildly, her good leg kicking out, her bad one a rod of fire and sickening pain. There was blood in her mouth, snot in her throat, despair in her heart. She was wrong about the door; it was on the other side of this nightmare and, therefore, it was inaccessible.

I'm here forever, she thought. Dear God, here forever. She looked back over her shoulder and immediately regretted doing so.

Two spills of liquid merged — one orange, the

other milky — and burst into flames. Beyond the burgeoning fire she glimpsed Halcyon, standing alone — the robots having retreated — and standing changed.

It was evident to her, even through her hysteria, that the machines had taken themselves as their inspiration; his brain-children, an association of mind and loins. Consequently their father was naked, his genitals bristling with needles which drew off a steady supply of his seed to sustain him through a proliferation of tubes. The machines had removed his face and the bone beneath; his brain, the womb of ideas, was on view, cradled in the vessel of his skull. His eyes had been unseated and were rigged to a delicate metal framework which fitted around his head so that he could view himself, his creations' own work, and admire and appreciate.

There was more; much more. But the single glance she took — and she only took one — omitted to register these details, except for hints of colour and shape. He seemed to be a man dressed all in red, and there were distortions about his person which flew in the face of human form, though how exactly she could not tell.

Even so, she could still manage to share with him her appreciation. The irony was unsurpassed; the realisation faultless.

The artist, art.

Then she smiled and, still crawling on her belly, found herself at the door — no longer a nightmare vision — and filling her lungs with the good air of the city. The sun was warm. Above the buildings the sky was clear. The chromework on the car shone and smiled back at her. Something heavy fell across her. Heat enveloped her; with her skirt and hair on fire, she dragged herself free and out onto the pavement. The flames were easy to extinguish, but the agonies racing through her broken leg were not so. She swooned.

The fleeting dream she had was of smoke and skinless things. When she finally came round she threw up on herself. Then, suprisingly, she slept soundly and her sleep was dreamless. She slept while the warehouse burned and blackened and ruined. She slept on the pavement with the mellowing sun on her face and was sleeping still when the law found her.



IAN HARDING lives in Wiltshire. He is about to begin a degree course at Swansea University reading literature and philosophy. He has been writing stories since he was 12 years old (he wrote a full length fantasy novel when he was 14) and hopes to go on to make a career in the field.

"The fleeting dream she had was of smoke and skinless things"



"By the way, he added casually, 'I've made a few modifications to the Simulator'"



SIMULA

Night was falling as Brian pulled up at the heavy iron gates of the large estate. A russet carpet of autumn leaves covered the ground; where the canopy of trees shrouded the driveway the leaves had drifted deeply. The icy wind tasted clean and fresh, but made him shiver as he rolled down his window to speak to the security robot.

"May I help you?" it inquired politely, the armour of its body glistening as it leaned towards the open window. Brian recognised it as one of the controversial security models programmed to use extreme force against intruders.

"Brian Michelson," he replied with due respect.

The gates swung open in a ponderous arc and the robot instructed him to enter. A cloud of leaves lingered in his wake as he accelerated swiftly through the gathering darkness.

He parked the car hurriedly, walked up to the front door of the mansion and rang the bell. He was relieved to find that it was Allan himself who answered, and not another security robot.

"You're late," Allan said curtly, beckoning him in with a wave of his chubby hand. "Chris and I have been waiting for nearly an hour."

Brian frowned. "I'm sorry," he said, stepping inside and taking off his coat, "the traffic was worse than I expected. By the way, when did you get that security robot? It's quite intimidating."

Allan nodded with sullen satisfaction. "It's meant to be," he whispered hoarsely as he turned and led Brian along the hallway to the dining room.

Chris smiled broadly as they entered the room,

and Brian was pleased to see that his mood was more agreeable than Allan's. "Hi Brian, we thought you weren't coming," he said.

"When have I ever missed our weekly game on the Simulator?"

Chris laughed loudly. "I swear Brian, if you could afford a Simulator you would spend the rest of your life in it."

"You're probably right, Chris," he replied.

Brian studied Allan as they sat down to their meal. His face was sombre, and he seemed detached, disinterested. Brian glanced at Chris and raised a quizzical eyebrow, but a shrug of his frail shoulders indicated that Chris did not know the reason for Allan's melancholy.

Allan said nothing throughout the meal, but remained in a shroud of silence while Brian and Chris made casual and lighthearted conversation. They both knew it was best not to disturb him when he was in such a mood, and it was not until the meal was over that Allan finally spoke.

"By the way," he said casually, "I've made a few modifications to the Simulator."

Brian looked startled. "What kind of modifications?" he asked.

"To add to the realism," Allan replied. "I don't think it is as realistic as it used to be."

"How can you say that?" protested Brian. "Even seasoned fighter pilots can't distinguish it from the real thing, apart from the G-forces of course."

"I agree," said Allan, "you really do get the impression of flying through space."

"So what are the modifications then?"

"I'll tell you once we are in the pods," he replied dismissively. Allan led the way up the enormous spiral staircase to the splendid hallway on the first floor of the mansion. They walked on until they came to a door larger than the others along the hall, and Brian could feel the excitement mounting inside him as Allan opened it.

The capacious room was almost entirely filled by the four large, irregularly-shaped pods, which were set out in a straight line. They were suspended in tubular frames, the orientation of which could be altered by the arrangement of hydraulic rams that surrounded them.



TOR

By Paul Dennis

'Wait here,' Allan said, holding up his hand. He walked over to the nearest pod and operated the lock mechanism, causing the side to swing upwards and reveal the dark interior. He pressed a small red button situated on the side of the pod and a myriad of screens, including the one in the upturned hatch, burst into life. He repeated the process with two more of the pods and then went back to where Chris and Brian were standing expectantly. 'I've changed the catch on the helmet strap, so I'll have to do it up for you,' he said as he leaned inside the first pod and lifted out the dull black, full-facial helmet, which was connected to the pod by a wiring loom.

Without saying a word, Brian climbed into the pod and donned the helmet. He grew impatient at the amount of time it was taking to do up the complicated catch on the strap, but his protests went unheeded; Allan insisted on securing it properly. Eventually it was done and Brian closed the hatch; its locking mechanism clicked solidly.

He sank back into the seat and took a deep breath, the reek of leather filling his lungs. The seat was as familiar to him as his own old armchair and the joystick and foot pedals were ideally positioned; which was not surprising considering he used the same pod every week.

Although the display screens surrounding him were producing a breathtaking view of outer space, Brian was more interested in the three-dimensional tactical display built into his helmet visor. He did not want to discover in the heat of battle that the display was faulty. It detracted from the realism if the game had to be restarted.

He had just completed his systems check when Allan spoke over the com channel in a crisp, clear voice which somehow reminded Brian of an old war film. A faded celluloid image of Allan wearing a leather pilot's jacket and ridiculous moustache flitted across the back of his mind. He almost laughed.

'I initialised the simulation with us flying towards the Kasanka system in tight formation,' Allan said, sounding less gloomy than he had been over dinner.

Brian strained to look over his right shoulder

and saw Allan's fighter not twenty yards away. The dull black finish made the features difficult to distinguish, but he could just make out the familiar flattened shape of the hull, the stubby delta wings and the twin tail fins upon which the number '1' glowed with intrinsic luminosity. His own fighter carried the number '3', and unless Chris had changed pods for some reason, his should be number '2'.

Brian's impatience was returning now, he had waited a full week for this moment. 'Can we get started?' he heard himself asking.

'I had better tell you about the modification now,' said Allan, his voice serious all of a sudden.

A deep sigh came over on the com channel, as though a heavy conscience were about to be unburdened. 'There is one vital ingredient missing from the simulation — danger.' Allan was speaking slowly, deliberately. 'So I've wired the helmets up to an electrical current source, strong enough to be fatal. When the computer deems a kill, it will switch the current on.'

Brian was suddenly filled with dread. He immediately reached for the helmet strap and began struggling to undo it. His throat had contracted, robbing him of the power of speech.

'The hatch lock and the new catch on the helmet strap both incorporate a microswitch,' Allan continued inexorably, 'if you attempt to remove the helmet or open the hatch the current will switch on automatically.'

Brian stopped fidgeting with the catch and slowly moved his hands away. He heard Chris shouting over the com channel.

'Are you serious?'

'I am quite serious,' came the cool reply.

There was a flash of light to Brian's right, and he covered his face instinctively as Allan's ship accelerated past him with frightening speed, its twin main thrusters flaming brilliant white. The com channel spoke one last warning.

'When you arrive at the Kasanka system you had better be ready.'

The words echoed in Brian's numbed mind as he and Chris drifted silently through space. The exercise felt so real that he had to close his eyes and make a conscious effort to remind himself that he was only sitting inside a Simulator pod, an elaborate toy of the idle rich.

He realised then that he might as well really be in the hostile realms of space. If Allan was telling the truth, they were trapped inside their pods, and would experience real death when the computer decided they had been killed on the simulation.

He heard Chris clear his throat: 'Do you think he's really done it?' he asked timidly.

Brian thought for a moment. 'I don't know,' he replied. 'He is certainly capable of it, and he has been acting a little strange lately.'

The answer did not satisfy Chris, who repeated his question: 'But do you think he's really done it?'

'I think we should proceed on the assumption that he has.'

Chris had hoped for a different answer. 'So what is our next move then?' he queried. 'Should we avoid the Kasanka system?'

'No, I'm afraid we can't,' Brian sighed. 'If you check your air supply you'll see that we've only got enough for about two hours. It's my guess that, if we don't finish the game within that time, we'll

"There is one vital ingredient missing from the simulation — danger"

fly anyway.'

He heard Chris swallow, choking back his tears. 'It's not fair, dammit, I'm not ready to die — not yet.'

'Neither of us is going to die, Chris.'

With grim certainty Brian knew what they had to do, and he knew that Chris would have to pull himself together if they were to be sure of succeeding. 'The game only ends when one player is left, or when the other players have surrendered...'

'Yes, that's what we'll do.'

Chris interjected, 'we'll surrender to Allan!'

'We will try to surrender,' Brian said calmly, 'but if he doesn't accept we'll have to fight him. Together we should be able to beat him, then one of us can surrender to the other and this nightmare will be over.'

Satisfied with their agreed course of action, Chris cheered up a little. But Brian did not expect Allan to accept their surrender; he checked his weapons again as they set course for the Kasanka system.

"A loud humming noise filled his ears, accompanied by an anguished scream that did not seem human"

There was no sign of Allan's ship on the tactical display as they passed the outer of the four small planets. It had taken them half an hour to reach the star system, during which time Brian had been trying unsuccessfully to prepare Chris for the inevitable battle.

'I've started transmitting the surrender code,' Chris said, for the second time.

'Just don't get your hopes up, that's all.'

Chris ignored him; he was scanning the radar intently, searching for any sign of Allan's vessel.

But Brian knew that Allan was extremely good at the game, and often won. To be sure of defeating him they would have to fight him together.

'If he doesn't reply to the code, I want you to break off to the right. He will only be able to follow one of us...'

His voice trailed off as he noticed the blip appear on his tactical display. Allan had been lurking behind the planet they had just passed, and was now approaching them from behind at colossal speed. Brian cursed himself for not anticipating such a basic manoeuvre.

Chris spotted him at the same time. 'He isn't answering the code, Brian, perhaps my equipment is faulty,' he said, his voice verging on panic.

'I've been transmitting the code as well, it looks as if we're going to have to fight him,' Brian spoke quickly. Allan was moving in rapidly and would reach them in seconds. Break right, Chris.

'No, I'm surrendering,' Chris whimpered, his mind made up. 'I don't want to fight.'

'For God's sake Chris, the guy is crazy. Take evasive...'. Before Brian had time to finish his sentence, two parallel beams of intense blue light cut through space towards Chris's fighter. Brian tried to shout a warning, but the breath caught in his throat. He watched helplessly as the deadly streams of energy found their mark and the ship disintegrated.

For the first time in his life, Brian experienced real fear. A loud humming noise filled his ears, accompanied by an anguished scream that did not seem human. He tried to shut out the sound, but failed. 'Chris? Can you hear me, Chris? Are you all right?' he called out desperately, but there was no reply.

A paralysis seized him as he realised that Allan had indeed been telling the truth; Brian had just heard Chris die.

He brought his trembling limbs under control as Allan's craft shot past him, travelling too fast to fire again. His first reaction was to escape; then he remembered the time limit. Only one of them could leave the Simulator alive, and he resolved there and then that it was going to be him.

With new-found aggression Brian opened the throttle and felt himself dragged back in his seat under the thundering acceleration. He did not pause to reflect what was really happening, which was that the pod was being tilted back; he was too intent upon catching his prey.

He used the tactical display to follow Allan's gentle curve back towards the planet, Kasanka 4, and set a course that would intercept him before he reached it. He remembered now that they had fought at that planet before. The unbroken canopy of thick cloud covering the mountainous terrain generated an eternal electrical storm that rendered the scanners useless. Speeding towards the impending confrontation, Brian tried not to think of the advantage that Allan would have over him if he reached the planet's surface.

The dark green bulk of Kasanka 4 was blotting out the stars when Brian finally caught sight of Allan's ship silhouetted against the swirling background. As he drew within range, Allan began to swerve erratically, but Brian countered each evasive action with a precision he had not thought himself capable of. He was about to fire his first shot when his ship began to shake violently, buffeted by friction with the upper atmosphere. Both he and Allan were travelling far too fast, but neither dared to slow down.

Brian struggled desperately with the controls as the hull of the ship started to glow a dull red colour. He ignored the cacophony of warning lights and buzzers that pleaded with him to slow the rate of descent, and concentrated instead on following Allan down through the clouds, using only his tactical display, which was already showing signs of failing.

His vision was still obscured by the clouds when the tactical display went completely blank. His heart skipped a beat — now there was no way of telling where Allan was. Wrestling with his fear, he stayed on the same course, and hoped that Allan was doing the same.

A few seconds later he burst out into the stormy skies below the clouds. For an instant he was convinced that Allan had evaded him, and was manoeuvring to attack him even now, but his fears dissipated when he saw Allan's ship, still flying down towards the mountainous surface.

When Allan reached the surface he levelled out for a moment and then darted into a deep canyon. Brian followed him closely. This was Allan's favourite battleground: a network of canyons that stretched for miles, interconnecting like a maze of corridors. He was familiar with every one of them.

The canyon was only twice the width of the fighters, yet both were going so fast that the murky walls appeared to be blurred. Brian was spurred on by a mixture of fear and hatred, and the distance between them shortened with each twist and turn as Allan tried hopelessly to escape his demonic pursuer.

As they wound their way through the narrow canyons, it was impossible to aim with any accuracy, but when they entered a stretch that was

virtually straight, Brian seized the opportunity. He could feel the blood coursing hotly in his veins as he lined up his sights and squeezed the trigger. Intense blue light pulsed from his weapons and he let out a shout of elation as Allan's fighter, with one wing blown off, spun out of control.

Brian fired his retrothrusters to slow down as the stricken fighter slewed towards the canyon wall and tumbled to the ground, coming to a halt in an undignified heap of twisted metal. However, when Brian brought his ship alongside the wreckage, he realised that the game was not over. The computer had not deemed the crash to be fatal.

The bleeping sound in his helmet indicated that Allan was trying to communicate with him. Brian experienced a strange feeling of omnipotence as he moved his hand across slowly and threw the com channel switch.

'Brian, this is Allan. I'm transmitting the surrender code, you've beaten me.'

Brian laughed hoarsely. 'You must be joking! You killed Chris when he tried to surrender, and now I am going to do the same to you.'

'That is your prerogative,' Allan said defiantly. 'But I wouldn't, if I were you.'

'What do you mean?' Brian asked with uneasy suspicion.

'Why do you think I bought that model of security robot? It is instructed to execute any guests who emerge from the Simulator pods, and only I can reverse the command. You have no choice but to accept my surrender.'

Brian hesitated a moment, and then said 'Wrong — you can go straight to hell.' A torrent of emotion swept over him as he squeezed the firing trigger as tightly as he could. He only released his grip once the screaming had subsided.

Brian sat for a few minutes while the display screens glowed with the usual messages of congratulation at winning the game. Although his eyes were stinging from the perspiration that drenched his entire body, he felt strangely relaxed.

Eventually the screens went blank, leaving only a small backlight for illumination. Carefully, he ran his fingers all around the catch on the helmet strap to discover how it worked, and then shut his eyes and clenched his teeth. It fell apart easily.

There was no humming noise; he had not been electrocuted. A feeling of relief swept over him as he pulled off the lethal helmet.

He tried to think through what had happened in the hour since they had entered the Simulator, but his mind was preoccupied with the thought of the security robot that might be lurking outside his pod, waiting to kill him. With his years of experience in robot design he knew that a robot, even the security model that Allan had bought, could not be ordered to assassinate a human. But then robots could be modified too.

And there was no telling how long it would be before they were discovered. Both Chris and he would be missed at work on Monday morning, but Allan might have instructed the robots that ran his estate to cover up their disappearance.

The prospect of spending more than a few hours in the cramped confines of the pod made his mind up for him. He reached over and operated the locking mechanism as silently as he possibly could. The hatch swung upwards effortlessly and a wave of cool, fresh air flooded in.

The room was dark and silent, but Brian could sense something moving close to the door. He strained his eyes in a vain attempt to pierce the darkness as he slowly edged his way out of the pod and crouched on the floor.

There was a shuffling sound, again from the direction of the door, and Brian realised in dismay that his only exit from the room was cut off. He remained in the crouching position, afraid to move.

He was still wondering what to do next when the lights suddenly blazed on. His eyes clamped shut against the brilliant assault and he straightened his back, steeling himself for death in the clutches of the security robot.

But death did not visit him. Instead he heard a familiar voice saying: 'God, Brian, you must have been really pissed at me!'

His eyes flew open in disbelief. Standing at the door with his hand still on the light switch was Allan, and beside him was Chris.

Brian glowered at them as the dull realisation sank in. 'It was all a game?' he spat the word out, feeling anger deep within himself, but he was too glad to see them alive and well to let that anger out.

'Yes, of course,' laughed Allan, 'you don't imagine I'm actually capable of doing something like that, do you?'

Chris changed the subject quickly: 'I've never seen you fly like that, Brian,' he said, 'you were great!'

Brian turned his gaze on him and he shrank back a little. 'Were you in on it?'

'No, I...,' Chris spluttered.

'He knew nothing about it,' Allan interrupted, 'the computer cut his pod off from us and then synthesised the scream and buzzing sound — quite convincing, wasn't it?'

Brian shook his head slowly. 'It was a stupid trick, Allan. What made you do it?'

Allan stopped smiling and his expression became serious. 'I meant what I said at dinner, the Simulator is very realistic, but it is not the real thing. The most important ingredient was missing, and that was danger, the danger of losing your life.' His lips twisted into a wry smile. 'Didn't you get a kick out of blowing me away?'

'No!' Brian replied indignantly.

'I don't believe you,' Allan sneered. 'What if I had been telling the truth about the robot? You were willing to risk your own life just to hear me die!'

'I'm a robot engineer,' Brian shouted, 'I knew you couldn't have ordered it to kill a human.'

Chris shifted his feet uneasily. 'Come on now guys, take it easy,' he said. He glanced at his watch. 'Look, there's still enough time for another game. How about it?'

Brian leaned back against his pod and let out a sigh of resignation. 'All right then,' he mumbled, 'but we'll finish this conversation afterwards.' He raised an eyebrow at Allan, who smiled and nodded, and then they climbed once more into their pods, eager for another game before the night was over.

But Brian was deep in thought as he pulled the helmet hesitantly over his head. The emotions he had felt when he destroyed Allan's fighter had revealed a part of himself he did not know existed.

And he knew that Allan had been right about the missing vital ingredient. He shuddered. Things would never be the same again.

"A torrent of emotion swept over him as he squeezed the firing trigger as tightly as he could"

**"Squealings
of injustice,
written in
blood with a
fingernail
for a pen"**

The memory — a bedsit in an old, run-down apartment block. Rising damp in the corners and peeling wallpaper near the smoke-yellow ceiling. The pungent smell of age and forbidden memories drifting lazily about, carried on the warm, stale air.

The place was the pits, near to rock bottom, but to the new resident it was living in style. The room had little furniture; the items it did have — wardrobe, table, chair, bed — were dirty, worm-ridden and pissed upon. But it was certainly better than a bench in Central Park.

The man was not alone, he shared the bedsit with a beautiful girl with auburn hair that framed her delicate features. The man had picked her up off the street, he had chosen her because he was fascinated by her hair. It was soft and silky and its colour changed with the light, becoming deeper or brighter according to the time of day. Her body was well-developed for her sixteen years.

Looking out of the dust-encrusted window, the man watched New York as it swelled with the lunch-hour rush. People walked below him, bumping and pushing and shoving each other with never a word of apology. It made the man wonder just what everything meant; his life, the lives of others, wars. Nothing seemed to be resolved, only evil thrived in a city like this.

He turned away from the sorry sight, and his eyes met something else that shocked him.

She lay — in deep slumber? — naked, on the dirty cot. Her legs were bent and slightly apart, his seed drying at her crotch; and her arms were crossed over her chest, as if to ward off evil, half-hiding the gaping hole between her breasts. No, not breasts — but guardians. Guardians of the heart. But they had failed her. The guardians hadn't stopped the man from piercing the soft, dimpled skin with a shiny seven-inch cook's knife; hadn't cried out as the man ripped her beating organ from her convulsing body, hadn't confessed that she was still a virgin. The guardians had died, taken their last breath as the warm blood drowned their pleas for survival.

His attraction to the girl had been purely physical. The girl's feelings were of no importance to him, as far as he was concerned she had no character, no personality. Only her hair, that auburn hair; the thing that had caught his attention.

The man stared at the young, dead body. Was she dead when he had picked her up? Did she die overnight? And, more importantly, did she die by his own hand?

The man could not remember. It didn't matter, the girl was dead now. That was a fact. He turned from the bed and left the room; the door behind him swung on its hinges. He can do nothing for the girl now — and why should he want to? She had called him a name. That's why he had killed her.

Now what was it that she had called him? He couldn't remember. The man tried to forget about the girl as he walked out of the apartment building and into the bright sunshine.



The man awakes and wipes the sweat from his brow. The memory of a dream fades away; or is it the dream of a memory? It must be the latter, it has to be, otherwise he wouldn't be sitting here alone in this cell. The walls close in on him; he has nothing to occupy his mind except his memories. Memories of boyhood, his home town, adolescence, his few friends, and the memory of taking the virtue of a dead girl.

The confirmation of this last memory forces him into the present.

A hushed whisper. His name.

Always the same, a whisper. So distant in his mind that he is not aware of the whisper becoming louder each day. For the past week — the whisper.

The name:

'Raymond...'

He wonders who the caller is. The voice is pleasant and soothing, it lulls him to sleep. Soon he will be with the whisperer. Until then, all he has is his lonely cell.

The only comfort is a small light set high in the smooth ceiling. The luminescence plays on the dark walls and lights up the scribbles of previous occupants, the markings of madmen and monsters, all telling the same story. Squealings of injustice, written in blood with a fingernail for a pen. Memories of a world they would never see again.

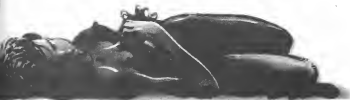
But the silence of his concrete prison is quite tranquil. Or is it that his emotions themselves are deadened?

He sits upright on the single bunk, then drops down to the ground. His feet hit the cold floor, and he shivers. He takes off his cotton trousers and masturbates — the final act of pleasure for a condemned man.

'Raymond...' the voice summons.

The time has come. Two blue-uniformed guards open the door of his cell. They do not speak to him and avoid meeting his eye. Raymond knows what has to be done. Flanked by the guards, he walks out of his cell, the dwelling which has been his home for the past three months. He won't miss the place.

He faces his death with total indifference. Even his last feeling of sexual pleasure had been



COUP DE GRACE

By Kirk S King



KIRK S KING is 19 years old and lives in the West Midlands. A chef by profession, he writes during his spare time. This is his first published short story; he is currently working on a full-length novel which deals with the ironic intricacies of life, and life after death.

emotionless. The three men start the final procession along the white corridor, the prisoner's feet slapping against the bare floor as his arms swing by his side. Their target — a door, a door that leads to another world, another state of being. His neighbours are silent in their cells. A sign of respect?

Upon his own request there is no priest to accompany the accused, the man is not afraid. He has no remorse, no religious fear of what is to come. Death is almost a friend, a symbol of comfort.

The door draws closer and the man realises that these are his last minutes of existence. Doesn't matter, he thinks. He deserves it, he knows that. It is the price you must pay. A death for a death.

He wouldn't mind so much about dying for the girl, if only he could remember killing her. On this matter his mind is a blank. Not that he had any doubts about killing her, he didn't. The blood was on his hands and, after all these months, he could still taste her heart's warm blood as it flowed over his tongue and between his teeth, coagulating and sealing his lips. Or were these memories just dreams that had shattered his mind? He couldn't recall exactly why he had eaten her heart, it just seemed a good thing to do at the time, just as it had seemed reasonable to kill her. It was her punishment for calling him weird.

How weird? It was not a word that could be associated with him! Weird? She deserved it. Weird? The cheek of it all! Weird? Bullshit!

The three men reach the closed door. Before the guard on his left opens it, Raymond asks him what the weather is like today. Rainy.

The heavy door swings open on its well-oiled hinges and reveals a small room which is empty apart from three things: a guard, who looks as though he has eaten too many 'Twinkies', a switch next to the guard and — the focal point — a chair.

A chair with a surprise buzz.

Raymond is guided to his seat by the shorter of the two guards. Once seated, the guard straps him into the chair. Once the leather straps have been secured, Raymond feels that he and the chair are one and the same. His arms are the arms of the

chair, his legs are part of its metal structure. Soon the electricity will flow through the chair, and through him too.

'Raymond...' the voice, soft and gentle.

The taller guard steps forward and produces a black cloth from inside his blue jacket. He places the hood over Raymond's head, blinding him forever.

The condemned man doesn't feel any false macho sense of pride in dying, but he does not fear death — he has always had the foreknowledge of an afterlife.

'Raymond...' Again the whisper, louder in the sudden darkness. All at once, Raymond realises who the caller is. Who else can it be but Death? His time has come. Death welcomes him.

'Come to me, Raymond,' Death whispers.

The spotty guard flips the switch and a current of high voltage electricity surges through the wires and into the connecting chair. The electricity sweeps through Raymond's veins, shaking his body and emptying his bowels. His nails blacken as the current reaches his fingertips. A smell of burning fills the air, and the guard who has released the demonic electricity switches on an extractor fan.

Raymond's eyeballs burst and the edges of his brain begin to melt, sliding down his nose and dripping into the black hood. His bare feet twitch as the last of his life leaves his body.

The guard — who has electrocuted many men — cannot help but notice the tremendous surge of evil leaving Raymond's body. And he knows that this evil will continue to exist long after the electric currents have been drained from the lifeless corpse. The civilised world's attempt to 'deal' with criminals, to rid society of this evil, seems fruitless. Nothing changes. We are born of evil to live in an evil state.

Raymond's soul leaves his body and travels down a long, dark corridor. Ahead of him he can see a shadow of a man. It is Death, and he is waiting for him.

'Raymond... Welcome to Hell,' Death says.

Raymond smiles and walks towards his master. Once again, Evil is free.

"He places the hood over Raymond's head, blinding him forever"



ONE OF THE GANG

BY PAUL MILLS

Their footsteps rang coldly off the smooth marble walls, their breath escaped in almost imperceptible plumes of steam only to die into nothing. The partial gloom of the corridor gave way to a terrible consuming darkness as it opened into a hall, a seeming abyss. As they entered, a new chill set into their bones.

Someone coughed nervously and a match flared; the darkness crowded hungrily around the little area of flickering yellow light.

'Find the light switch, for God's sake,' hissed one voice, a little to the left of the match flame. Someone laid a hand on his shoulder and he spun round, his heart pumping madly.

'Hey, relax. Who did you think it was, Frankenstein?' another voice laughed.

'Christ, Steve, don't do that!'

Steve laughed again.

'Got it,' a third voice called in the darkness. Suddenly, cold white light flooded the room. The aching pain in their slowly adjusting eyes caused everyone to blink. Steve gave a long, low whistle.

'Now this is eerie,' he said, his sapphire-blue

eyes drinking in his surroundings. 'Take your pick, Dave.' He waved his hand to indicate the coffins lying on their separate slabs. There were oak, pine, even steel ones; some were distinguished by ornate family crests, others were simple and unadorned.

'Shit, guys, is this really necessary? I mean, isn't there something else I could do?' Dave's voice quavered as he spoke and, despite the chill air, sweat glistened on his forehead.

'What's the matter Dave, scared?' someone taunted him.

'I thought you wanted to be one of the gang, Dave. Was I wrong?' It was Steve again, his voice held the slightest hint of a sneer. Dave quailed.

'No, it's just that, well, what if you can't find me or something? Christ, I could die!'

'Look, Dave, nobody's forcing you to do this.'

'But if I don't then I'm not in the gang, right?'

Silence gave him the answer he was searching for. 'OK, damn it, I'll do it. There, I'll have that one over there,' he said, pointing a finger at a simple pine coffin.

Steve walked over and read the name on the plastic label.

'Benjamin Morgan. Well, Benny old boy, you're going to have to come out of there for a while. Dave needs your bed.' He laughed cruelly. 'Come on guys. Let's get this lid off so Dave can get comfortable!' A couple of lads took screwdrivers from their pockets and went to work on the lid; another began to skewer a small hole in the coffin's side with a hand drill.

'So that you can breathe,' explained Steve when Dave threw him a questioning look.

Eventually they prised the lid off and leaned it against the side of the slab. Several white faces peered cautiously over the edge, and then recoiled, loosing several expletives.

'What's the matter, never seen a dead man before?' sneered Steve with false bravado. 'Get the



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stiff out of there.' Four trembling hands reached disdainfully for the corpse and, with averted eyes, the lads hauled it out.

There are some empty ones over by the far wall. Put him in one of those.' With the dead weight dragging at their arms, the boys staggered over and gratefully dropped the body into an empty and, as yet unmarked, coffin.

Dave stood watching the operation, a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach slowly spread, like a cancer. His mind whirled; he didn't want to do this but if he didn't he wouldn't be one of the gang and — God, how he wanted to be a part of it, part of a fellowship, something that his shyness had prevented him from becoming until now. But he was scared, scared that they'd leave him down there forever or that they would come too late, by which time the air in the coffin would have been used up. His body would be in rigor mortis, limbs curled and fingers and toes clawing at the wooden tomb in a final mortal agony.

'In you get Dave.' Steve's mocking voice broke in on his terrified thoughts. He nodded. He'd do it and when it was all over he'd be one of the gang, just like he had always wanted to be.

The inside of the coffin was padded and fairly comfortable, though a little cramped. He lay on his back and stared disconsolately upwards at the faces of the others who peered down at him. One of them cracked a sick joke and the others laughed nervously. He tried to give them a positive smile but it came out more sickly than positive.

'See you tomorrow Dave,' said Steve. 'Oh, and sweet dreams!' Then his face disappeared as someone replaced the lid.

The darkness inside the coffin was complete; the only sounds that reached his ears were the squeakings of the screws as they too were replaced. For a moment, claustrophobia consumed him and he clawed uselessly at the lid and tried to scream, but he checked himself and regained control. Taking deep, regular breaths he told himself not to panic and decided that perhaps sleep would be the best course. Mercifully, sleep took him quickly.

The sudden lurching motion of the coffin woke him and, for a moment, panic threatened to overwhelm him again as he remembered where he was. But low voices from without caught his attention and provided a link with life for his terrified mind to cling to.

The coffin swayed gently as it was carried along and then the voices faded away into a dreadful silence. There was a sudden jolt as the coffin was set down and a minute or two later Dave heard the slamming of doors and a roar as an engine fired into life.

The journey seemed to take an age, by the end of which he was feeling motion sick and his claustrophobia was bubbling dangerously close to the surface. He suppressed these feelings however, for soon he would be free of the confines of his wooden tomb and would be one of the gang. He could endure this nightmare for that.

The doors of the hearse were opened and he felt the coffin being hoisted into the air and carried for a distance until, with a jerk, it was set down.

His sense of expectation heightened as he waited. Soon he would be six feet underground and a member of the gang, or as good as. Steve and the rest would be out there now, watching to see where he was buried, ready to come and dig him up as soon as the coast was clear.

Dully, he could hear a priest intoning drear words to which he listened with some interest as he had never been to a funeral before.

After some fifteen minutes the priest finished his sermon and Dave felt the coffin being moved, not roughly but smoothly, as if infinite care was being taken not to disturb the body within. He did not feel the dropping sensation he expected to feel as the coffin was lowered six feet into an open grave. What could they be doing? he wondered. Then the motion of the casket ceased and a faint roar reached his ears. What the hell? The air in the coffin became warmer and stuffier, and the roaring which now seemed to fill his whole world was supplemented by a dreadful crackling.

The realisation hit him like a blow from a hammer, and shattered his sanity.

'God, please no!' His screams were lost amidst the roar of the fire as it took a firm hold on the wood, consuming it, burning it with a heat so intense it would turn bone to ash. No one would ever hear his tormented cries; those closest would mourn, but they would mourn for Benjamin Morgan, not Dave Taylor.

"His body would be in rigor mortis, limbs curled and fingers and toes clawing at the wooden tomb in a final mortal agony"

The Iron Ground

JAMES M ANDERTON

"She turned and suddenly, just for the briefest of moments, felt a horrible, reasonless dread come over her"

The heavy wooden doors of the gym closed behind her with a solid thud! What was it she had said now? That crazy female who had slipped off the vibro-massage belt ten minutes earlier, breaking her wrist.

'It pulled me, Donna! I didn't fall. It pulled me and it was trying to... to squeeze me! Claptrap, of course.

So how come she was scared simply because she was on her own again in a building she had been alone in quite happily a hundred times before?

Unfortunately, she knew only too well...

Tina Dawson. Young. Slim. Very pretty. Long, oh-so-long-and-lovely-blonde hair. Sitting at the Pec-Dec machine. Working on her firm bustline. Every fat woman's envy. Then: a scream, frightened and bewildered. Then another. Panic. Heads turning

towards the sound. Nobody moving — just looking. More screams that become one long, piercing scream. Donna herself turning, looking. The girl's face a rictor of agony, of fear. Her hair, oh-so-long-and-lovely-blonde, caught in one of the pulleys. No, in both of the pulleys — one at each side of her head.

Struggling, trying to hold up the weights. Growing tired. Still nobody moving. The weights beginning to slide down their shafts. The pulleys beginning to reel in hair. Tina Dawson's blue and bulging eyes, her head shaking violently, pleadingly, from side to side as the weights slip lower, reeling in hair until there is no more slack.

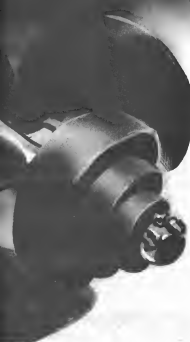
And worse:

Eyes, accusing and helpless, meeting Donna's in the mirror. Screaming in silent horror. Why won't you help me? Why won't somebody take the weights?

A tear running slowly down Tina Dawson's cheek.

The weights dropping.

Blood spattering onto the mirror like rain drops. That had happened six weeks ago. From what she had heard, Tina Dawson was back home now. There had been talk of skin grafts and transplants, of complete recovery and of wigs. Donna had not contributed to these rumours. Instead, she had tried to ignore them, to forget, to pretend it never happened.



was ripped mercilessly from her scalp. Then Donna broke into a wild, loping run.

She hit the changing-room door in the time it took her to draw one short, ragged breath. With her right hand she clasped her shoulder-length hair tightly against the back of her neck. If something took a hold there it would pull and pull and —

The door flew inwards, crashing into the adjacent wall with sufficient force to engrave the curved shape of the handle into the lacquered pine-panelling like a hand print in wet concrete. Then it closed mechanically behind her, shutting out the gym and that ridiculous feeling of fear. 'Safe once more,' Donna assured herself, staring at her wide-eyed reflection in the vanity mirror alongside the row of coin-op hairdriers.

'Fifteen minutes, Scare-Cat,' she told herself, and peeled off her leotard.

She shut the shower off and listened, her ears filled with water.

Pat-pat, pat-pat, pat...

And behind the sound of the dripping faucet?

Nothing.

Yet she had heard something; a single, hollow rumbling sound, muted by the sounds of running water splashing off her body, drumming about her bare feet. Vibrations in the water-pipes? Perhaps... but she didn't think so. This was more of a...metallic sound; the sound of hollow metal upon metal rather than the movement of water or air within it.

She stepped nimbly out of the cubicle, her head cocked slightly in intense concentration. Her eyes were fixed on the changing-room door as she waited for it to be rattled in its frame, or for the handle to move slowly downwards under the pressure of some unseen hand on the other side. Then the door would squeal open, and there he would be...

Who?

Frankenstein, that was who. Or The Abominable Dr Phibes. All she was doing here was scaring herself. Sure.

But there had been a noise.... Her red bath towel lay draped over a low section of tiled splashback, together with her toiletry bag. She grabbed it hurriedly, clutching a corner nervously to her mouth in a manner that caused the rest of it to hang in a broad concertina in front of her. She listened, hearing only the muffled sound of the wind-sniffing around the frosted glass of the window on the opposite side of the room and the occasional pat-pat from the shower head onto the cold tiles.

After what seemed an age, she exhaled carefully. From her Adidas holdall she produced a pair of clean panties and stepped into them. Every rustle of her towel, each slap of her soles on the damp tiles, seemed amplified and wickedly betraying and echoed amongst the rows of skeletal clothes racks. She fumbled on her bra.

Eric! Her mouth dropped open at the thought. Of course! How stupid could she be?

Quickly, she wrapped the towel around herself and crept stealthily over to the door. Grinning, she reached out and pulled it open.

The light from behind sent her slender shadow out onto the landing... where there was nothing to obstruct it. No Eric Jackson crouched behind the door wickedly tapping two dumb-bell sleeves

"You only had to spend a night alone in your own home to discover how these places could talk to you, tell you scary stories, create havoc in a willing imagination"

She shuddered again and looked up the staircase towards the anaemic glow of the gym's fluorescents. The light there should have comforted her, but somehow it only made her feel colder. Somewhat reluctantly she padded towards it, her arms wrapped around her slender chest.

The top of the stairs was crossed by the landing corridor in a T. To the right, twenty feet along the plush carpeting, was the gym, and before that the solarium, complete with its two Sunflower sunbeds dutifully waiting to provide the paying punter with an all-year-round-orangey-brown tan. To the left were the changing rooms.

Donna halted, considering the former option. In the gym there were discs and bars to put away, dumb-bells to rerack, benches to position ready for tomorrow's male session.

'Bugger it!' she said after a quick check of her watch. 22.25 and thirty-four seconds, it pulsed. Thirty minutes to shower, change, and meet Eric at The Moonlight for last orders.

Business had been slow tonight — it had been slow all week, come to that. Even the most strong-willed regulars were beginning to experience the strange magnetic pull of their armchairs and the persuasive voice of their colour TVs now that winter was looming behind these dark nights. What sparse equipment had been left dotted about the floor of the gym would just have to remain where it was.

She turned and suddenly, just for the briefest of moments, felt a horrible, reasonless dread come over her, bringing with it those final few nightmarish seconds before Tina Dawson's hair

**"A large
cast-iron
plate
crashed into
her bare,
unprotected
ankle,
sending a
screaming
pain up her
leg to her
knee"**

together. Instead, all that greeted her was a chilling draught and the total darkness at the top of the stairs. And behind that darkness...?

"Eric... Are you th-ere?"

There was no reply. Eric was waiting for her at The Moonlight public house just as they had arranged. Standing in the open doorway, Donna suddenly felt quite foolish; some eleven minutes ago she had locked the doors downstairs. Bolted them in fact. So far as she remembered, Eric was no magician, lock-picker or ghost who could walk through walls. She was scaring herself... and for what good reason? She had heard something... a noise out on the landing, possibly coming from within the gym... but that noise could have been caused by any one of a hundred different things, these old buildings were filled with them; creaking floorboards, loose roof slates, crumbling plaster, and yes... even air-locked water-pipes! You only had to spend a night alone in your own home to discover how these places could talk to you, tell you scary stories, create havoc in a willing imagination. The number of times a rapist had crept up her stairs at two in the morning and stood outside her bedroom door, deadly silent save for the sound of heavy, repetitive breathing and the occasional scratch of his blade against the glossy paintwork, was fairly few. She was scaring herself now, and she was making herself late for her meeting with Eric.

Hesitantly, she turned back towards the light of the changing room.

At first she thought the new noise had been conjured up in her imagination. It was so defined, so clearly audible that it could not possibly be coming from anywhere else. That sound again; that hollow rumbling sound of air trapped inside copper piping. Except now the sound was not like that at all. Now it was the sound of two, or perhaps more; metal objects striking one another, and although they did so in no strict rhythm, Donna felt strangely certain that the noise was wholly deliberate. Her head jerked towards it.

Did something move down there in the darkness of the gym? Driven by a sudden overwhelming curiosity, Donna marched across the landing, her strides full and determined, until she reached the staircase; finding herself at the top of the stairs, she had to force herself not to retreat down them. Barely drawing breath, she crept past the solarium, one hand supporting her progress on the painted surface of the wall. Tentatively she sought the panel of switches located on the inside of the right-hand door jamb.

They weren't there.

Panic gripped her. She wanted to run now but her limbs would not obey. Even her extended arm refused to budge, despite her certainty that something cold would close around her wrist and drag her in. Her hand brushed the switches twice, and then she had it. She snapped down switch after switch, bathing the gymnasium in dazzling white light.

Her wide eyes darted glances around the gym, trying to observe every piece of apparatus at once. Temporarily, everything was one uninterrupted blur; a kind of confused mental cocktail of images one on top of the other. Eventually she focused on a large dumb-bell sitting on top of a blue, padded-plastic flat bench away to her left. The dumb-bell — 25 kilos, Donna considered with mild horror — was swaying gently from side to side, unassisted,

each full movement completed by the hollow clang of the upper cast-iron disc as it collided with a stainless steel barbell sleeve standing casually on its end at the foot of the bench. Numb, and moored to the spot in the doorway, Donna watched it, her mouth hanging uselessly open in a perfect O. The dumb-bell persisted on the flat bench, the gentle sway developing into a fully-fledged rocking motion until it was clearly on the point of over-balancing. Finally it did just that; it toppled over onto the heavy-duty carpet and went wheeling across the gym into the wall, thumping into it loudly and sending up a thin cloud of plaster dust.

As if in response to the start lever of some huge and complex mechanical toy, two bench-press machines rattled into life, followed closely by the towering Lat-machine which began to sway backwards and forwards, nonchalantly kicking itself free of its steel moorings. It lurched backwards into the row of narrow, high windows that overlooked the street, smashing them and hurling shards of glass down onto the empty pavement. Then it began to walk towards her, with long splinters of floorboard still bolted to its metal feet.

Near where a small clan of moulded discs were performing what resembled some form of ancient ritual dance around a tin of spare collars, both Leg-Extension machines began to judder simultaneously. They jitterbugged across the carpet, their weights chattering and cursing in synchronised rebellion. Flat benches all across the gym took to their plastic-padded backs and slid greasily behind the Lat-machine, which now staggered drunkenly towards Donna. The noise was deafening, like that of a busy scrap-yard.

Donna watched all of this in a mesmerised trance, thinking it must all be a huge, nonsensical nightmare from which she would soon awaken — probably seconds before the Pec-Dec reached out to take an ever-so-firm grip on her oh-so-lovely-blonde hair.

Where the hell is it now? The Pec Dec machine...

The thought jolted her from her trance and she scanned the room quickly. A large cast-iron plate crashed into her bare, unprotected ankle, sending a screaming pain up her leg to her knee. Skin peeled. Blood oozed. Another smaller plate — only 5 kilos in weight — went for her other leg like a small, yapping puppy. Donna hopped clumsily backwards onto the landing, clutching her leg. The plate scooted through the door after her, missing her healthy limb by a matter of inches before skidding through a gap in the balcony. It landed with a dull, lifeless thud twenty feet below. Donna stumbled and collapsed against the partition wall of the solarium, bumping her head, struggling to keep upright. The Lat-machine was closing rapidly, long shreds of purple carpet hung and flapped about its floorboard sandals. Other big machines followed: the Hack Squat, the Cali machine...

Inside the gym doorway one of the eight full-length wall mirrors exploded into a firmament of sparkling silver pieces. Glass shrapnel peppered Donna's left cheek, drawing pin-pricks of blood. She glanced sideways and was horrified to see a six-foot steel bar protruding from the plaster wall less than eighteen inches from her face.

Donna turned and limped, screaming, down the landing corridor, sprawling headlong after only five clumsy strides, betrayed by the big red bath towel which lay twisted around her ankles.

'No, oh, no!' she whined, trying desperately to kick it loose. The towel continued to cling to her, becoming tighter if anything. With valuable seconds wasted, Donna swung her legs around and sat up into a position where her hands could get at it. Almost mockingly, the towel surrendered. She scrambled frantically to her feet, glancing over her right shoulder, certain that the Lat-machine would be looming over her. What she saw ignited a faint spark of hope. The Lat-machine's progress had been temporarily hindered—it had become trapped up in the chains supporting one of the fluorescent tubes. The light had shattered under the stress, but the chains clung on.

What Donna failed to see was the thing standing at the top of the staircase ten feet in front of her, cutting off her only route of escape. Wildly, blindly, Donna crashed into the unguiving plastic padding on the Pec-Dec's back-rest with such force that she was thrown off balance.

She reeled backwards, agony singing the blues somewhere inside her shoulder. Over she went onto her arm. The pain was exquisite. The Pec-Dec's metal arms smashed together, sweeping round from their outspread lateral position into a kind of hideous, mechanical bear-hug. Greased pulleys whined like a cold wind, drowning Donna's whimpers. Two hundred kilos of cast-iron flat weights rose effortlessly and fell in a thunderous bellow of metal on metal. Then Donna found her feet again. Blood ran from an open wound over her tricep.

'Go away!' she screamed pitifully at the Pec-Dec machine. 'Just leave me alone, can't you... pleaseeease?'

The Pec-Dec machine responded by opening its arms a little.

Come to me, Donna, the machine was saying. Come to me, let me hug you, let me stroke your lovely long blonde hair...

Behind her the Lat machine smashed through the top of the doorcasing, demolishing the plasterboard and cheap wood. Behind the Lat machine an army of weights, benches and expensive body-building equipment clamoured enthusiastically, hollering and chanting metallic obscenities. Donna retreated, stumbling once more against the partition wall separating the landing from the solarium. Her only chance of escape was to leap the balcony into the black hole of the reception area. Suddenly she felt something dig coldly into the small of her back; it was the handle of the solarium's folding screen door. Quickly, Donna yanked it open and darted through, slamming the flimsy plastic behind her.

Where now, for christakes?

Weak light filtered through a grimy square of skylight above her head, reflecting off the perspex lids of the two Sunflower sun-beds that occupied most of the available space.

Hide, you silly bitch! Hide! Hide! Advice she had offered to many a beautiful but frustratingly dumb movie actress over her years of watching late night thrillers on the box. With the partition walls vibrating around her, Donna lifted the lid of one of the sun-beds—the one farthest away from the door—and slipped underneath. The perspex sang icy cold on her buttocks and back, causing her to let out a startled whimper. She heaved on the bulky lid and let it fall shut with a solid, reassuring thud.

She lay flat, staring at blackness. A shrill giggle spilled out of her and she clapped a hand over her

mouth.

The Pec-Dec punched through the screen-door. Ultra-violet tubes shattered as the unoccupied sun-bed was tossed aside like a discarded egg-carton. Perspex snapped like kindling. Inside her coffin, Donna's lungs screamed white fire. She bit down on her lip so hard that she felt the salty warmth of her own blood. A single, silent tear slid down the curve of her cheek.

Why won't somebody help me? Why won't somebody take the weights?

Dark memories from the past.

Now the noises began to escalate... Other things were entering the tiny lounge. Something hit the side of the sun-bed. Donna screamed through her fingers.

Thump!

'This is it,' Donna thought. She put her hands over her face.

THUMP!

Suddenly the noises ceased. It was like pulling the plug on a blaring radio. Within the solarium there was a silence as the machines froze, and Donna's eyes opened.

And in the background...

Thump! Thump! Thump! A faint, hollow rapping sound coming not from within the room, but from below... something knocking on wood... No! Someone knocking... on wood... On the door downstairs. It was! It had to be! Eric! Pleeease...!

The noises about her started up again, drowning out the other sound so completely it might have been a figment of a hopelessly despairing mind. But there was something different about these noises now... something that Donna realised with such relief that she found herself hovering on the edge of consciousness.

The noises were diminishing. They were the noises not of objects advancing, but fleeing.

She listened, unable to believe she was still alive. Then again, amid the crunching of plaster and the fading groan of moving metal...

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

The machines moved away—shuffling, scraping, moaning. Some of the smaller ones seemed to scurry. Soon the noises died completely. The machines had resumed their positions on the gym floor, ready to be used tomorrow... by men? Was that what all this was about... a fight for territory? This was crazy! Or was it just she who was crazy?

In this new state of silence it was easy to persuade herself she had imagined all this; that she had somehow fallen asleep here and dreamed the whole show. That was the logical answer. The sane answer. If truth be told, weight-training equipment simply did not come alive, did it? And even if it did, nobody else would believe it. The more she thought about it, the more she was certain she must have climbed in here, over-set the timer, and subjected herself to severe sun-stroke.

Slowly, she reached out and pushed on the lid of the sun-bed until it fell open.

The other sun-bed stood where it always had, perfectly intact inside the folding screen door, not ripped to shreds but snugly fitted into the solid partition wall of the lounge.

In the darkness Donna started to laugh, and she was still laughing when the Sunflower sun-bed snapped itself shut and the dial turned from left to right.

Shortly afterwards, ultra-violet tubes lit the solarium like a midday sun, but by then Donna had already started to scream again...



JAMES M ANDERTON was born in Haworth in 1960 and is married with four children. He has worked for British Rail, helped to build and run a hotel, and presently has a job which involves walking the streets. He has been writing fiction for about a decade and is currently planning a novel, *Lifespan*, about reincarnation. The Iron Ground is his first published story.

"Come to me, Donna," the machine was saying. 'Come to me, let me hug you, let me stroke your lovely long blonde hair'"



CLANCY

By Martin Cook

Clancy watched his wife's eyes close slowly beneath the tinted perspex and realised that, although he could gaze at her whenever he wished, she would never see him again.

Right now it didn't feel so bad, but he knew that sooner or later the loneliness and despair would creep up on him and pounce unmercifully. She lay naked in a transparent sarcophagus that merged smoothly into the wall, her body given optimum support by self-moulding synthetic sponge. A red light indicated that the capsule was now filled with the inert vapour which would help to preserve her, body and soul, for up to four hundred years. Clancy opened a small hatch in the wall and pressed the blue button beneath. The temperature within the capsule — and within every cell of his wife's body — was instantly reduced to three hundred degrees below zero. He watched her fondly for another half-hour and then left to carry out his duties for the day.

Hers was the last of two hundred thousand cryogenic suspensions, the last fifty of which Clancy had performed himself. It was an incredible process that still held many secrets. Clancy knew, when his wife was reanimated, that her most recent memory would be of him looking down at her; he also knew that she would not dream. Similarly, all the other subjects now 'slept' soundly in the vast complex of sterilised rooms and corridors which comprised the Ark. The Ark had never been officially christened as such and only Clancy knew it by that name. The Ark was mankind's last chance.

Clancy rode the lift to his quarters and went about preparing his midday meal, whistling as he did so. There were machines to perform this task for him at any time he wished, but cooking was something he enjoyed, a rare act of creativity. Even so, as he ate the meal he became more and more solemn, for it began to dawn on him that his wife's company was the last human warmth he would experience. He toyed with the idea of prematurely

reviving her or one of the other sleepers if he became desperate for company, but that would be unfair and selfish. No living organism had ever survived the freezing process twice. Clancy finished his dessert and wandered back to the lift. The washing-up he left to the machines.

He made his daily tour of the Ark's silent and empty passages. Even after living within its smooth grey walls for two months, Clancy still marvelled at the tedious soulless perfection, the product of hasty design and construction; conceived by one of the wisest men in the world, designed by one of the most brilliant and financed by one of the richest. All of them — now slept within it. Clancy checked the monitoring and life-support systems and examined the day's discrepancies on the computer console. It was routine stuff. A few unstable metabolic rates which had been automatically rectified, a small vapour leak on level eighteen, another unverified report of the small rodent in the food storage area. Clancy chuckled to himself, still undecided about that one. He almost hoped there was a little furry friend running around down there, it made the place seem more like a home. He spent the rest of the afternoon working at the console and when he finally wound up it was six o'clock.

After tea he entered the lift and pressed the very top button, instantly feeling the g-forces drag at his body as the elevator accelerated away up the shaft. It came smoothly to a halt and Clancy stepped out into what seemed like thin air — the very top of the observation tower, a hemisphere of sparkling, clear glass pierced through the middle by the lift shaft. He sauntered around, gazing out at the desert and downwards to where the upper surface of the Ark, a glossy light grey, stretched out below and spread outwards into a vast ovate dome shape which met the ground some three hundred metres below. The underside of the Ark was also convex but to a much lesser degree; it was supported on trestles so that, when the Black Death finally reached it, the structure would float. Exhaustive

"He laughed nervously, images of spores and infection and decay filled his brain"

tests on displacement and density had been carried out to ensure this would take place.

There was an old-fashioned easy chair in the room and Clancy fell into it with a sigh. Beside this was a small amenities console and a few seconds of button pushing brought Clancy quiet music and a plastic cup filled with red wine. He settled down to watch the sunset. It was one of the few beautiful things left in his life and for some reason nightfall seemed particularly spectacular these days. This evening it was marred only by a dark smudge on the horizon where the desert met the rocky sky. Clancy studied this with a mixture of curiosity and dread.

Before the coming of the Black Death, Clancy had on occasion pondered the end of life on the planet. He had considered disease, nuclear holocaust, the destruction of the ozone layer, a regression to anarchy, and various other threats, but he had never once envisaged that a fungus would bring death to almost every living thing on earth.

'Fungus'.

He said it aloud and rolled the sound about inside his head. Fungus. Fungus, fungus, fungus. After a while the word began to sound funny and horrific, and somehow alien. Clancy laughed nervously, images of spores and infection and decay filling his brain. He could clearly recall the first news reports of voracious and prolific black fungi which were eating away at the Brazilian rain forests. Teams of scientists rushed to study the phenomenon and each one had returned with a fresh horror story. They pronounced it a mutated form of *Myxomycophyta*, or slime fungus, and had brought back photographs of an enemy which looked like something from the worst sci-fi shocker imaginable. The media immediately dubbed it the Black Death, and it slowly but surely defeated every fungicide and fungistat the unsuspecting world could throw its way. The speed of its reproduction caught the scientists unawares and the Black Death spread across the land, engulfing everything in its path — trees, planets, animals — even penetrating rock and cement and brick. Some towns were completely surrounded and the airlifts were never fast or frequent enough. Once it came into contact with the body of a living organism the fungus infected every cell within a matter of hours. Some cases managed to last a few days — and those were the worst. People rotted on their feet.

Three months after the first appearance of the plague, South America had become a seething, blackened mass of decay which polluted the atmosphere with its stench. Huge gelatinous slicks began to drift across the oceans, although by then other nations had already become infected by fleeing evacuees. Organised society faltered, unravelled and finally ceased to function.

Of course, some substances could resist the acidic secretions. One such substance was the complex polymer from which the Ark was constructed. The Ark was triple-skinned and the gaps in between the layers had been flooded with a strong alkaline solution. Clancy liked to speculate what relics would remain intact when there was nothing left to feed on, when the Black Death finally burnt itself out and dried up in the sun. Forks and spoons, the odd car body shell, a few prosthetic limbs — who could say?

Clancy estimated that it would take a further three weeks before the plague reached the Ark. He

shuddered, arose, and stepped into the lift as the last thin sliver of sun fell below the hills.

His last job of the day was to check the Custodian. By now Clancy was tired and felt every one of his forty years. On a good day he expected to live another forty years at least in the Ark's germ-free environment. The chances of an accident befalling him were slim and the Custodian was the insurance against this. A unit roughly the height and width of a man, the Custodian contained a mass of multi-purpose machinery. She possessed caterpillar tracks but she could also 'float' along the electromagnetic rails that lined every corridor and room in the complex. Around her girth were four connection points, each of which could accept a vast array of tools — from a miniature screwdriver to industrial laser welding equipment — all of which could be manipulated with the utmost dexterity. And at the heart of all this pulsed a fourth grade synthetic intellect. At present she was lifeless and, although she was an omen of his own death, Clancy felt a strange kind of affection for her as he went through the comprehensive checklist.

Instinctively he touched the small plastic box implanted, almost flush with the skin, in the flesh just behind his left ear. In the event of his death this would activate the Custodian by radio signal. And if any chemical changes inside his brain indicated the first signs of mental instability, it would explode a charge buried within his spinal cortex. The professors had taken every possibility into consideration. However, human care of the Custodian was preferable to any other and, as his old age advanced, it was Clancy's duty to thaw a chosen sleeper and instruct him in the tasks necessary to maintain the Ark.

Clancy washed and shaved in his room. Turning his back on the unmade double bed, he took an armful of fresh blankets and went down to his wife's cubicle and arranged a makeshift bed next to her. He studied her and thought how beautiful and peaceful she looked as she slept. Part of him slept within her, they had planned it that way. It was odd to think that he might become a father perhaps two hundred years after his death. Clancy settled down beside her and soon his snores echoed down the empty corridor.

He began to dream. His dreams were always vivid and clear. In this one he was a frail old man filled with an overwhelming sense of joy, for the Black Death had passed and it was time to awaken the sleepers. He longed to see his wife first but there was a prearranged sequence, so he found himself beside the cubicle of a stranger. Clancy threw the lever and as he did so he heard his wife's voice cry a warning from somewhere far away. But her words came too late, and the lid of the sarcophagus hissed open. Clancy peered in, wrinkling his nose at the smell. It was filled to the brim with a thick black sludge. He gazed into its depths. Suddenly a ghastly decomposed face rushed up to meet him and he stumbled backwards in horror. All around him people, dripping with oily slime, smashed their way from the cubicles and shambled towards him.

Clancy awoke and sat bolt upright, his eyes wide with terror. His heart raced and his mind was in a turmoil. Ten seconds later the charge inside his head exploded splattering blood, grey matter and fragments of bone across the bright, clean wall. He fell back onto the blankets. Eight floors up, the Custodian whirled into life.



MARTIN COOK is 23 years old and works in the civil service. His hobbies include painting, photography and playing the guitar (badly). Clancy is the first short story he has had published.

"It was odd to think that he might become a father perhaps two hundred years after his death"

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FEAR

Reviews

OFF THE SHELF

BLOOD ORANGES AND BRITISH HERITAGE

David V Barrett discovers the political delights of Garry Kilworth's latest paperback, smells the contagious blooms of *The Child Garden*, and trips into mythical Britain.

It's a real treat for Garry Kilworth fans; for during the last few months Unwin have published three new paperbacks. Kilworth is one of Britain's finest writers, both of novels and of short stories. He specialises in thoughtful, anthropological studies, which might sound boring but aren't at all: put a particular type of person in a particular situation, and see how they behave. Kilworth's settings are always original, and his characters always utterly believable.

Cloudrock (£3.50) is about two tribes living on a mushroom-shaped mountain, one by day, the other by night, ignorant of any other society. Both tribes are inbred: sons marry their mothers, the tribes eat the flesh of those who die, and malformed babies are chucked over the edge of the rock. The story is told by the Shadow, born malformed but not killed, so having to live on the fringes of his tribe who totally ignore his existence. It's fascinating stuff, and Kilworth, having set up his society, is able to examine it in even greater depth when changes come into it.

The Abandoned (£3.99) are the despised and rejected of society: the unwashed and unwanted, the vagrants, the mentally sub-

normal. They've been abandoned on Earth, left to their own devices. Not very bright Guppy's one skill is flipping into the air any rat which runs across his foot, and bringing his foot down on its head as it falls, to provide dinner. Guppy and two friends trek across a waste city where there is no food left in the gutters and dustbins, and where some of the people they meet view them as a walking meal. It is a quest, and like all quests, the true prize is the search itself.

The Hollow of the Deep-Sea Wave (£3.99) contains a mainstream novel and seven short stories, obsessional tales inspired by Kilworth's army days on islands in the Indian Ocean, about how different cultures make people think and behave in different ways. It's not SF or fantasy, but it's just as alien, and a must for all his fans. The final story, *Blood Orange*, set in a Japanese POW camp during wartime, is perhaps the finest thing Kilworth has written; you'll never feel the same about eating an orange again.

It's great to see these three available; what I'm now waiting for is the paperback of *Hunter's Foxes*, a beautiful story about foxes, which I think is the book that will bring Kilworth, one of the most significant writers in the English language, to the

attention of a much wider audience.

CATCHING KNOWLEDGE

Geoff Ryman is another of the current generation of British SF/fantasy writers who produce literature rather than pulp; comparing his *The Child Garden* (Unwin, hardback, £12.95) with, for example, Asimov's latest 'major new novel', *Nemesis* (Doubleday, hardback, £12.95), you wonder that they can both belong to the same genre. (To get the record straight, Ryman is a Canadian living in Britain; Kilworth is a Briton currently living in Hong Kong; Asimov was born in Russia but has lived in the USA for the last 66 years. What's that line about a prophet having more honour outside the land of his birth?)

The Child Garden is set in a future London where children learn through viruses; it's unsettling when you come across toddlers having deep conversations about philosophy. Milena is immune to the viruses, so has to learn for herself; she isn't immune to love, however, and in a society where homosexuality is deviant thought, she finds she loves another woman and, what's more, a woman of an altered (and so despised) breed of humanity. She is an actress and director; she also, like Ryman *et al*, lives in a country not of her birth, and is searching through her Art for her own identity, her own lost history. This is a complex and fulfilling novel, impossible to summarise; it is beautifully written, and beautiful, and disturbing, a novel over which to linger.

All I can say about *Nemesis* is that I've completely forgotten the story after reading it. Okay, it's about a space community that discovers another star a couple of light years from us, and moves there. The only character with any character is Marlene, who can tell people's moods, anxieties and truthfulness from their body language, a device which saves Asimov from having to go to the trouble of letting readers get inside characters' heads,

because Marlene does it for us. Asimov says in a note that, 'I have given up all thought of writing poetically or symbolically or experimentally'; yup, it's true. Eminently ignorable.

BEHIND REALITY

To finish, two very attractive large format non-fiction books. Every now and then you get a sensible book about the paranormal, and Hilary Evans' *Frontiers of Reality* (Aquarian, hardback, £14.95) is one you should read. Covering UFOs, visions, faith-healing, near-death experiences and much more in considerable detail, this doesn't make outrageous claims for them, but neither does it debunk them. Worth it for the illustrations alone.

When Bob Stewart and John Matthews talk about Celtic mythology, it's worth paying attention. Their legendary Britain (Blandford, hardback, £14.95) contains a dozen new versions of old tales about Merlin, Thomas the Rhymer, Robin Hood and other British mythic characters, each placed in its setting, powerful places like Glastonbury, Iona and the chalk White Horse of Uffington, with descriptions, historical background and beautiful colour photographs. Both these books provide value for money.

THE DEMON LOVER/THE SEA PRIESTESS

Dion Fortune
Publisher Aquarian Press
Format PB, £3.99/£4.50
Category Occult fiction

Dion who? The question may be on your lips, so I'd better explain that Dion Fortune was the *name de plume* of one of Britain's most famous real life magicians and psychics. Member of The Golden Dawn, a magical fellowship to which many great writers, poets and artists – such as W B Yeats – belonged, and founder of her own organisation, The Society of the Inner Light, she was also keen to pass on her

magical knowledge and did so in fiction such as *The Demon Lover* and *The Sea Priestess*.

Her novels are highly poetic and contain a great deal of mysticism. Despite their rather lush titles they are not simply works of horror or fantasy. Take, for instance, *The Demon Lover*. It's a simple story of magical domination. The mysterious Mr Lucas, member of an all male, magical lodge, takes a liking to Veronica, an innocent young woman who does not realise what she's letting herself in for when she succumbs to his charms.

He, unfortunately, incurs the wrath of the Lodge for spilling its secrets and suffers a fate similar to that spelled out in Masonic ceremonies. That, however, is not the end of the 'affair' for Veronica, who soon find that Mr Lucas wants her even more badly from his place in Hell – and for much more than love.

Fortune portrays the girl as the passive and receptive influence, while the dominance of Mr Lucas shows the way in which the magical male/female currents work. It also shows, in a kind of morality play, that those precepts should be used in unison rather than mused for black magic.

The Sea Priestess is similar in context, but shows that male and female magical rites can set the time to rights if conjoined. This time, asthmatic Wilfred Maxwell

meets Vivien Le Fay Morgan, a priestess of the moon goddess and initiate of the Hermetic Path of magic. She makes him her partner in the arts and, while performing rituals to even out kinks in some psychic tides, learns that there is much beyond the so-called real world. *The Sea Priestess* is a book which professes every man and woman to be a potential god or goddess, together able to heal the rifts in the physical world and that beyond. It is, again, a morality play of our times.

The books contain a great deal of occult symbolism and it's true that occultists will probably get more out of the novels than lay people. But these novels are also splendid stories, creations of an imagination seemingly expanded and enriched by forces with no allegiance to good or evil, that can balance the natures of those two opposites rather like an engine combines the powers of two forces to create a third.

Whatever Dion Fortune did in her life, she has left an interesting and vivid collection of tales that can at once thrill, entice and chill with their atmosphere. At a time when occult fiction seems to be making a comeback, her novels will provide illuminating reading both for connoisseurs of the magical arts and writers who want to gain an insight into how subjects should be fictionalised. **John Gilbert**



has sent a stealthy starship to sneak around the Caean Empire to learn more about this weird enemy. A second plot begins with the clothes-conscious Zodean Forbath finding some Caean clothing. These are regarded as dangerous drugs in the Zode Cluster and soon enough Forbath has become addicted.

While the starship becomes embroiled in a war between cyborgs and apparently unmanned spaceships, Forbath begins to enjoy unexpected success in his new Caean suit. Ultimately the two sub-plots meet up, and the real truth about the weird clothes is revealed. To say more would be to spoil this amusing and thought-provoking story.

The second novel is, if anything, even more cleverly conceived. *The Pillars of Eternity* details the bizarre quest of Joachim Boaz. A group of philosopher scientists have reconstructed the crippled Boaz as a relatively normal-looking human. Moreover his mental abilities have been extended by his new bones, which are crammed with computers.



Unfortunately these bones, unlike a natural nervous system, have no cut-off point during intense pain. Soon enough Boaz falls into some ethereal fire, which torments him with what seems an eternity. He is reborn by the scientists once more, and the bones' flaw is corrected, but he has become obsessed.

Boaz believes that the universe will end by collapsing back into itself, then exploding in another Big Bang. He also believes in

predetermination, so given that this Big Bang will be identical to the last, all history will repeat itself – including his awful experience with ultimate pain. Hence, Boaz sets out to change time. Obviously a complex quest, since if everything is predetermined how can he possibly change anything? To live up to the philosophy there's also an appealingly twisted subplot with some oddball villains who he needs to help him.

While lacking a bit in true character depth, *Pillars* has an intriguing subject matter and is surprisingly compelling to read. Overall this is a great value-for-money package. And what's more another two Bayley books, *The Fall of Chronopolis* and *Collision With Chronos* are also available in a single volume for the same price. As their names suggest, they're also obsessed with time, and perpetually re-living one's former existence. However in these novels time travel is an everyday process, and 'past' and 'future' empires on Earth fight it out in true space opera style, with decorative females and brave men. This, and the unpronounceable names, can get a bit wearisome but the ideas are always interesting. **Stuart Wynne**

WILD CARDS VOLUMES ONE AND TWO

Comic book heroes in a text format sounds like an interesting concept and, indeed, the books that have so far been released have proved surprisingly intelligent and well written. Volume One of *Wild Cards*, edited by George R.R. Martin, sets the scene of an alternate-Earth that has only just recovered from World War Two. An alien invasion force explodes a bomb over the planet surface, spreading spores of a deadly genetic virus. The result: two races of mutants, one possessed of wondrous superhuman power – the Aces – and the other damned to existence with cruel deformities of form and spirit.

The book charts the coexistence of some of the characters which, naturally, not very peaceful. There is, for instance, the semi-autistic master jockey, the alien Dr Tachyon who came to Earth to defend it from his own bomb-loving people, and Golden Boy, whose footballing talents put him on the side of good.

Lined up against these Aces are the evil Jokers, who include Puppetman, who uses his skills to enslave humans, and Fortunato, who uses the sexual currents of Taintic magic to release his fury.

The second book, similarly, contains an array of superheroes and villains, this time Kid Dinosaur, Crystals and Jubee to the action created by the established others. Each book is a



THE SLIME BEAST

'It's... it's... 'Laz choked and heaved and flung (sic) tightly to Gavin.

'Yes,' he breathed. 'That foul smoul from the pit – *The Slime Beast*!' (Grafton, paperback, £2.99)

A hideous monster has come stalking out of Guy N. Smith's back catalogue and it really is foul. Professor Lowson, his briefly virginal niece Liz, and assistant curator Gavin Royle have gone on a dig in Humber-side. Soon they're excavating away, uncovering the eponymous slime oozar who promptly begins breathing. After a bit of vomiting, the Prof begins to think about *Poover*. 'This beast was a robot except that it lived. Inceded a master.' 'As

for his companions: 'there were ways and means of silencing his companions... even if one of them was his niece'. So rather than reporting the Beast to the police, they leave it to go about murdering people with names like Manson Haywood.

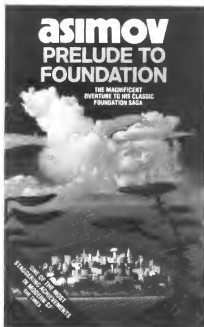
The locals, being ignorant peasants, believe the murders are to do with a superstition. The landlord knows it from 'Me old Dad... and 'e got it from 'is dad afore 'im, who got it from 'is dad afore him, who got it... ' But the scientists believe it came from a meteorite. Wherever it came from, it's a classic of bad taste trash. **Stuart Wynne**

THE PILLARS OF ETERNITY, THE GARMENTS OF CAEAN

Congratulations to Pan Books for this one, a single paperback volume containing two novels by Barrington J Bayley for just £3.99. The new volume gives much deserved attention to two intriguing tales. My favourite is easily *The Garments of Caean*. It takes the simple notion of clothes wearing the man, and develops it into an utterly enchanting adventure.

The novel revolves around two societies, the normal Zode civilisation, and the dress-obsessed Caean. The former fears invasion from the latter and

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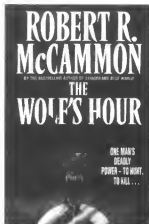
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composite novel rather than a collection of short stories, and it's interesting to see how the writers, who include Roger Zelazny, Edward Bryant, Howard Waldrop and George RR Martin, deal with the topic in their own very different styles.

Wild Cards provides good, superheric entertainment, giving the lie to those people who say you can't combine fantasy with SF. The books also include some of the top genre writers and that's a good enough reason alone for buying them.

Mark Westerby

the result is a lot of stiffly cautious ex-millionaires slowly rebuilding their fortunes so they can buy the process again. A more dramatic consequence is the growth of a murderous, power-hungry clique within the immensely wealthy Stileman Foundation.

Dallas Barr soon becomes the prey of this clique, along with his Catholic girlfriend, Maria. As Dallas strives to survive with the help of Eric, a dead man who lives on in a computer chip, Maria comes to appreciate life more. Since she is nearing the end of the

compensates. Moreover, there are many finely described scenes, particularly Maria's time under a nerve drug, which lift this well above the quality of most SF. Not quite the masterpiece one might have hoped for perhaps, but nevertheless highly recommended as a well written novel on an important subject with good, involving characters.

Stuart Wynne

MISSION EARTH 4: AN ALIEN AFFAIR

Jettiero Heller, alien hero of *The Jewellers Plan*, *Black Genesis* and *The Energy Within*, is back in another self-consciously humorous episode from L. Ron Hubbard's *Mission Earth* series.

This novel (New Era, paperback, £3.95) yet again has Heller involved with attempts to save planet Earth and make it ripe for intergalactic invasion, by controlling pollution. He has developed a fuel system that will cut down on the deadly chemicals spilling into the atmosphere, but his test car is sabotaged by Solian Gms, his supposed partner who is really out to wreck his plans.

Not that Gris has an easy time of it during this novel. No, he's been captured by the sex gourmand Miss Finch who wants him in a pickle. Meanwhile – and I use the word advisedly –

tiprant practice of black magic with the science fiction gloss of a new age America.

In fact America has been renamed *The Guff* which, if you're into occult terminology, is a place similar to limbo or a hall of souls. Regrettably, the souls in this hall are bored, and run after demons to get their kicks. Take Regina and her bee-laden for instance. As members of the ruling class they can do what they want. Famed day and night, they decide that there must be more to life and agree to start a devil-worshipping cult.

Slightly lower down the social ladder, lad' den, a Guff police captain, has to cope with a rash of inexplicable deaths – murders or suicides? – which just may be the



result of Regina's diabolic overindulgences. Add to that a psychopathic perfume manufacturer who likes to play Jekyll and Hyde, and you've got either a strange crossover story that is likely to please both SF and horror fans to some degree, or a deeply meaningful comment on the supposedly idyllic life led by those better off than the rest of society.

I suspect that Bester wanted to show that the rich are just as human and guilty of sin as the rest of us, but that their sins – of omission, of not caring – can be the worst. *Golem 100*, though written in the 1980s when the so-called new capitalism was in its infancy, is a dismal vision of future society which is probably more valid now than it was then. That, after all, is one function of science fiction. It also makes a jolly good read, for those of you who were wondering.

John Gilbert

WEAPON

Robert Mason first leapt into the bestseller charts with *Chickenhawk*, an excellent account of his time as a helicopter pilot in the Vietnam War. *Weapon* (Bantam Press, paperback, £6.95) is an unexpected follow-up, in that it's a SF novel. The background is contemporary, with the Solo Project taking place in Costa Rica, close to the Nicaraguan border so the Project can secretly be tested in action against the Sandinistas. The SF element enters in the

NIGHTMARE PLAYGROUND

THE CAMP

Guy N Smith
Publisher Sphere
Format PB, £3.50
Category Horror

Guy N Smith. You either love the guy's work or hate it, but you can't help but be impressed by his sincerity. He holds no airs and graces about his writing. It's horror entertainment with no frills and even Charles I. Grant, who is renowned for his subtle works of horror, has a soft spot for Guy's novels.

His latest book, *The Camp*, takes a symbol of our most innocent pleasures, the holiday camp, and turns it into a nightmare playground.

The holiday paradise has been turned into one massive test sight for a drug called C-551. Designed to produce peaceful hallucinations, it instead unleashes the desires of its victims – in this case the holidaymakers. Massacre follows murder and, from the very first, you know you're in for a blood bath.



Though not particularly inventive, *The Camp* is a hectic excursion into horror, a quick dip rather than full immersion – which is no bad thing. Closer scrutiny of this story would have had me sharpening my critic's hatchet, but I still enjoy the non-stop, profligate romps occasioned by the likes of James Herbert, Shaun Hutson and Rex Miller. As they say, don't waste time writing about it, go out and have a ball! John Gilbert



Octopus Oil has hired a PR man to destroy any hopes Heller has of doing damage to their world energy monopoly.

Life can only get better, in anything else but an L. Ron Hubbard novel, but as usual the author knows how to use science fiction to make political points as well as twist humour out of ordinary human beings. The subject matter may no longer largely be a concern of science fiction, after all lead free petrol is here to stay; but, like all those cold war spy novels about the Berlin Wall, it's still a valid and entertaining read.

Mark Westerby

GOLEM 100

Alfred Bester's recently republished novel (Mandarin, paperback, £3.99) combines the

THE LONG HABIT OF LIVING

Like the AIDS scientist at the recent Vatican debate, Haldeman seems to be of the firm opinion that banking on an afterlife is a dubious way of living. *The Long Habit of Living* (New English Library, paperback, £6.95) is Haldeman's first novel in over five years, and it revolves around the upcoming techniques of life extension.

The novel's main character is Dallas Barr, who lives on twenty-first century Earth and is 130 years old but looks thirty. He owes this miracle to the Stileman Process, a complex medical operation which costs those who want it everything they own – so long as their worth is over a million pounds. This is because the late (he died in a crash) Lord Stileman was something of a socialist. The aim is a more equal society, but



decade between the need for Stileman Processes, and initially inclined to dying, thus will become very important. The book switches between the first-person perspectives of Maria and Dallas to add depth to a not entirely unconventional thriller plot.

If the aims of the clique are disappointingly familiar, Haldeman's sure touch with characterisation more than

HUNT THE ALLUSION

CHILDE ROLANDE

Samantha Lee
 Publisher Futura
 Format PB, £4.50
 Category Fantasy

Hermaphrodites seem to have been in great demand lately. First we had the delights of Storm Constantine's *Wyrantia* trilogy, with its strange myths and sex-linked occult ritual. And now Samantha Lee is on the still largely untrodden trail with *Childe Rolande*, a tale of a 'freak' born into a matriarchal society.

Unfortunately Rolande, who sports both male and female sexual equipment on all but the cover of this book, satisfies all the requirements laid down in an ancient prophecy, a legend which says that 'The one and the both' will unite the divided nation.

Rolande becomes a potential redeemer for the meekfolk who, after a great plague, are regarded by women in much the same way as most churchmen see Eve in the biblical story. This men of Alba want the hermaphrodite to destroy the witch queen of the kingdom and free them from slavery.

The book is written cleverly in the first person so that Lee does



not have to equate her principal player with his/her gender. This also allows Lee to slip out of the books' politics and, in the land of Alba, show that a kingdom ruled by any one part of the population can put the other elements into slavery. *Childe Rolande* also draws on poetic influences, particularly on Byron's poem 'Childe Rolande to the dark tower came' - which Stephen King has also used as the basis for his fantasy. In this book, however, there are enough poetic parallels to play that wonderful game so beloved of Umberto Eco: hunt the allusion. It's a game that, if well played, will pay off for any lover of the fantasy genres and those interested in the politics of humanity, as expressed through the freedom of fantasy.

John Gilbert



gleaming form of Solo, a bipedal robot weapon who's stronger and faster than most humans. What's more, he's also extremely intelligent, smarter than most humans in fact. Initially this really does strain credibility to breaking point, especially when all the other technology - such as the lovingly described *Heavy* helicopters - is so conventional. But Mason soon slips in a bit of deft explanation which has enough reference to neural network computing and such like to restore believability. More importantly, the character and perceptions of Solo become increasingly interesting, and once the plot kicks into gear, putting the book down is highly unlikely.

On the debit side there are a few

SF clichés, such as the good scientist/morose military commander conflict, which perhaps come from unfamiliarity with the genre, but the details of life with Nicaeanan villagers and Solo's dangerous relationship with them, are very well evoked. Also enjoyable are the low-tech engineering skills Solo displays to the villagers and, inevitably, his awesome performance in combat. All in all, a first class techno-thriller.

Stuart Wynne

STEEL GHOST

Chris Hockley
 Publisher Grafton
 Format PB, £3.50
 Category Horror

What sort of book would you expect a *Sax* journalist to write? It sounds like the obvious straight line for a joke, but the inevitable has happened and Chris Hockley, sub-editor on the paper that proved the inspiration for the *Spitting Image* pig stringers, has written a novel.

Now I bet you're waiting for the outpouring of venom, an attack on his novel's shortsightedness, the overstatement of gore... Well, you're in for a surprise. *Steel Ghost* is one of the most readable,

panoramic first-time horror novels I've stumbled over in some time. The packaging, a stock image of Stalin surrounded by lightning-flashed skulls, does not bode well but once inside, you're treated to a complex psychic thriller in which the said Russian premier and mass murderer returns from the grave, much to the distress of psychic Quarter, who suddenly finds himself the target of assassins.

The book has a truly international flavour, a plot that is reminiscent of one almighty long car chase with no let up, and characters who are surprisingly realistic. It all makes you wonder what Mr Hockley is doing on *The Sun*. Comparison of his style with others is a little difficult, but I would put him somewhere between Shaun Hutson and, now hugely successful, Brian Lumley who has written several cold war horror novels himself. Such a position can't be bad.

Mark Westbury

THE FACE OF FEAR

Another previously pseudonymous, overlong and uninspired psycho thriller from Dean R Koonin (*Headline*, paperback, £3.90).

Graham Harris is a clairvoyant and veteran television chat show performer, when he receives a vision of a young woman being brutally murdered while he is on the air, however, the experience comes as a bit of a shock.

Suddenly, everyone seems to want to destroy his career. The killer just won't get out of his head, the police think, because of his ability to foresee the crimes, that he may be the murderer of a growing number of victims, and the host whose chat show was interrupted by the violent vision wants to expose him as a money-grabbing fraud as well as psychopath.



The denouement, set in a high rise block where the killer stalks Graham and his girlfriend, lasts nearly 190 pages - out of 314 - most of which are spent in cat-and-mouse fashion. While Koonin has the undeniable ability to stretch agonising suspense across dozens of pages, *The Face of Fear* seems inordinately long and, despite the violence and tension,

leaves the reader with a feeling of relief and satisfaction for getting out of a seemingly endless, at times tedious, tunnel.

When I first heard that Headline was to release several of the pseudonymous works from Dean R Koonin I was pleased, to say the least, but now I have my doubts about the validity of the move. The desire to make more money out of the author's books could damage sales of his latest novels, which are some of the most inventive and tightly written books I've ever read.

The pulpy pseudonymous novels should have remained under wraps.

John Gilbert

THE TALES OF ALVIN MAKER 3: PRENTICE ALVIN

Orson Scott Card
 Publisher Legend
 Format PB, £6.95
 Category Fantasy

The monthly dose of fantasy maestro Orson Scott Card is provided by the third in *The Tales of Alvin Maker*.

Alvin, you may remember, lives in a parallel universe roughly equivalent to the pioneer days of America but where special kinds of magic, or making, exist. Alvin's magical powers allow him to heal things and people, but he has yet to learn to control them. To do that he must return to the place of his birth, near the Hatzack River. Here he becomes acquainted with Peggy, the woman who has protected him all his life, and the evil Unmaker who wishes him dead.

Peggy, who has the power of second sight, also makes an important discovery about Alvin's future and, as a result, decides to leave him at the mercy of evil rather than act as a catalyst for those unhealthy influences.

The tale rides slowly, but with



JUMBO PORTIONS LUNCH

Toby Rothwell of Stockport wins himself a free lunch out with author Christopher Fowler. The nine runners up (there should have been ten, but there were insufficient answers to this tough teaser) are: Matthew Pook, Wimborne, Dorset; Jan Perfect, Mickleham, Surrey; J Edwards of Ilford; Stuart Richards of Aylesbury; Dewi Jenkins from Carmarthen; Nico Brett from Swindon; Stephen Crossley, West Wadhams, Kent; David Wilkes, Epsom, Surrey; and W Byrne from Streatham in London.

Card's ever-present sense of wonder both in the surroundings and the characters there's always plenty to enjoy. An occasional ripple of storytelling muscle keeps readers continually aware of the evil playing in the background, hiding its time for future novels in the series and ensuring that Alvin does not pass through his apprenticeship to adepthood without a single scratch of body or mind.

Premise Alvin is an ideal winter read. A tale of deep summer, it's a warming story of aspirations and the constant fight between good and evil. You might even say it glows in the dark.
John Gilbert

THE HEIRS OF ST CAMBER 1: THE HARROWING OF GWYNEDD

Katherine Kurtz
Publisher Legend
Format PB, £6.95
Category Fantasy

It's been a while since Katherine Kurtz wrote about the outcast race of magicians called the Deryni, so it is a pleasure equal to finding a new *Oscon* Scott Card novel to read and enjoy the first in a new series of books about these uncontrollable wonder workers.

The Deryni are still in deep trouble. Gwynedd is ruled by a weak boy monarch who, in turn, is controlled by a succession of power-crazed regents intent on finally destroying every vestige of Deryni influence. Events come to a head when Bishop Alister Cullen, friend to human and warlock alike, dies and Camber of Cudd, the venerable avatar who possessed his body and represents a font of knowledge for the beleaguered Deryni, also appears to be gone.

Despite the weeks of official grieving in which the Bishop lies

in state, his body does not deteriorate and it appears that he is trying to hold his human remains together until his son and daughter can find a spell to bring him back from the dead.

The book is a saga in the true sense of the word, with huge cast and appendices charting the history of Gwynedd which would put Tolkien to shame. It's a rich brew of a read, but then Kurtz is a grand mistress of the high fantasy genre, and still unchallenged by new writers in the field.
John Gilbert

OUT OF THIS WORLD: MYSTERIES OF MIND, SPACE AND TIME

Edited by Peter Brookesmith
Publisher Macdonald
Format HB, £12.95
Category Fantasy/reference

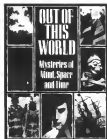
They don't come much bigger than this, and that's an understatement. This massive 490-page large format book covers just about every major contemporary mystery of mind, space and time, with essays on each subject, line drawings and a host of colour photographs.

Subjects include the Bermuda Triangle, the secrets of ancient civilisations, sea monsters, psychic powers, UFOs, life after

death and spiritualism. Each section is written by a conglomeration of experts in a contemporary style which will find favour with all non-scientists/academics.

It's a reference work that every fantasy/horror/SF fiction writer in search of new subject material should have, it is a seemingly endless resource for researchers into the paranormal, and it's a damn good, and thoroughly entertaining, read for people who like to muse about what could be behind the veil of reality.

The book is a consummate reference tool but, like the Bible, I



suspect it's better suited to those who want to dip into its pages rather than someone who wants a long read. Whilst it is well structured, and certainly not as fragmented as others in this area, it's unlikely that the case-after-case style will prove suitable for sustained interest, no matter how appraising the information may be. I suspect that many readers will seek out *Out of This World* in their public lending library but, if you receive it as a Christmas present, you'll most certainly have a treasure trove of thought-provoking images.
John Gilbert



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SPIDERS SHOCK FOR SPIELBERG MAN

Predators in Manhattan, sub-humanoid zombies, psycho dressmakers, and directors with ability . . . Yep, this month John Glenday has his hands full.

The big news this month is that Steven 'Nico' Seagal is likely to star in *Predator 2* as Schwarzenegger's New York cop brother.

The pissed-off *Predators* (brothers of the original) come to pay their respects to Arnie by wasting his little brother, but they didn't count on the boy being an arse-kicking Kung Fu expert.

William Gibson (original *Alien 3* writer) is getting some movie action from his own Cyberpunk material. *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3* and *The Blob* director Chuck Russell has been hired by Tri-Star to draft a screenplay for *Neuromancer* - the high tech, *Blade Runner* influenced novel. Tri-Star hired Russell on his ability, rather than his bankability, which has restored my confidence in the film industry.

As we're talking about *Aliens*, let's drop the monthly rumour

about the much awaited sequels. This month reliable sources tell me that Ridley Scott has signed to direct number four. Kenny Hamlin is still down for number three which will shoot when he's finished *Die Hard 2*.

For anyone who cares, Troma are making a sequel to *Class of Nuke 'em High*. It's called *Sub-Humanoïd Zombie CON12*. As for *Toxic Avenger 3: The Last Temptation of Toxic*, it is reportedly below average and destined for the video mart. The ending also leads into number four.

It's sad to hear that *Stepfather 2* is a less than spectacular movie. Several US reviews say it's dull, not surprising as Mr Perfect wakes up in hospital after his multiple stabbings from the end of the original movie. Director Jeff Burr went straight on to *Chansan 3: Leatherface* and it will be interesting to see how he has progressed as a director with his handling of the *Excalibur* chainsaw theme in the California-shot sequel.

APPROVED BY ED GEIN

More news on *Silence of the Lambs*. No Jon Voight, but Scott Glenn (*The Right Stuff*, *The Keep*) has signed. As a point of interest, cult filmmaker John Waters was interested in the role of Buffalo Bill, a dressmaker psycho who works with material approved by Ed Gein - I think he would have been inspired casting.

I can officially report that *Summers 2: The New Order* started shooting in Canada this November. The director is Christian Duguay.

Watch out all you arachnophobes! Bugshot Spielberg producer Frank Marshall is making his directorial debut with *Arachnophobia* (fear of spiders, for the uninformed). American audiences didn't know what an Abyss was, so what chance they have with this title, I don't know.

Wes Craven's movie *Shocker* will be okay (it's doing good business in the US), because he had the good sense to cast the brother of 'the world's greatest living director', Ted Raimi, in a role. Brother Sam's first big bucks movie *The Dark Man* is about a horror superhero and will be a great success, capturing the essence that *Batman* missed.

Life on the Edge, FX man Tom Burman's directorial debut, was not well received in the States and suffered a title change to *Meet the Hollowheads*. Having seen it at Shock Around The Clock 3, it is obvious that the

Americans find offbeat humour hard to stomach, unless it is Monty Python. We will see this film courtesy of Parkfield Entertainment early in 1990, and is worth seeking out.

Stephen Herek, director of the first *Critters* movie, will be the director of the much vaunted *Spideeman* movie. It looks like getting under way this time around and it's rumoured that Spidey will be donning a nasty black outfit for his appearance.

CORMAN RIFT

A sequel to Robert Englund's *Phantom of the Opera* is already in the wings. *Phantom of Manhattan* transports our hero to the Big Apple to continue his lurking in the shadows. He had better watch out for those *Predators*, they don't scare easy.

And now for the Bad News Corner. There is to be a sequel to *Flowers in the Attic* because of its outstanding success on the video rental shelves. To be called *FITA 2*, it will be based on the Virginia Andrews sequel novel, *Petals in the Wind*.

Bad News 2: That multi-purpose director Jim Wynorski, of the new *Swamp Thing* movie and *Not of This Earth*, has written a sequel to *Don (Phantasm I and 2)* Coscarelli's *The Beast Master*. Why?

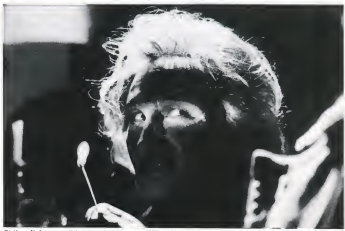
Bad News 3: We still have one more underwater movie to come. It's called *The Rift* and it's direct from the Roger Corman fun factory. It stars R Lee Ermey, who was everybody's favourite sergeant in *Full Metal Jacket*.

PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Starring: Robert Englund, Jill Schoelen, Alex Hyde-White, Bill Nighy, Terence Harvey, Stephanie Lawrence
Director Dwight H Little
Distributor Castle Pictures
(UK)
Cert TBA

To be honest, we all thought this horror orientated version of *Phantom* signalled the start of cash-in time. After all, if it wasn't for good old Andy Webber's musical version of Gaston Leroux's boring book it's unlikely that filmmakers would have let his horrorificity out of the box for many years to come.

However, the Englund/White production, done on the most ludicrously small budget and filmed a million miles away from the good ol' US of A - see **FEAR** issue 11 for report - is a surprisingly dramatic affair. The glitzy costumes seem real, the locations are gloriously spooky, and the special effects team, led by Kevin Yagher, have done a



Strike a light, guv, didn't I see you in the 1925 Lon Chaney version?

tremendous job of creating a phantom face patchwork, culled from other people's flesh.

The movie takes place in two time spans: the present day New York and late nineteenth century Europe. It begins in New York, with a young music student, Christine Day - Schoelen - who plays a piece of music written by the infamous Phantom of the Opera. The next day she is involved in an accident à la *A Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, and transported back to the Phantom's time.

She briefly sees the Phantom before returning to consciousness and her own century. Days later she discovers that the Phantom has crossed time to kill anyone

who is unfavourable to Christine. The murders are gruesome, performed with the constant upkeep of the Phantom's face in mind, but it is England's performance as the mad maestro which takes the film beyond the expected slasher movie label. It's unlikely that his performance will be bettered by any of the other versions in the pipeline, though I suspect that if anyone can talk Michael Crawford onto screen, England may well have a rival.

As far as chills go, however, *Phantom* is an ill breeze that whirls into a hurricane which, I suppose, bodes well for the planned sequel.

***FEAR US PREVIEW**



Thank Gaaaad! I'll never play like Paul McCartney again... The piano bites back in *Shocker*

SHOCKER

Starring: Michael Murphy, Peter Berg, Cami Cooper, Mitch Pileggi
Director: Wes Craven
Distributor: UIP
Cert: TBA

Wes Craven hasn't really had a success since Freddy Krueger hit the dream boards at the beginning of the Eighties, so it's not surprising that this talented writer/director should try to repeat the prescription with his first major movie for Alamo Films. Despite initial impressions that the picture is little more than an extension of movies such as *Prison* and *The Chair*, or a straight repeat of Sean Cunningham's *Horrorshow*, Horace Pinker, the supposedly ghostly psycho killer of the piece, has slightly more stage presence than those who have gone before him.

Horace - don't ya just love that name? - is a television repairman and worshipper who kills his wife, beats his child and goes on a rampage to murder just about anyone he can find. He's eventually brought to justice by Jonathan Parker - Berg - who starts to dream about the killer. He and his father, who coincidentally is a policeman, capture the killer after one final



outrage which leaves Parker's girlfriend dead and another family hacked to ribbons.

Mr Pinker is set to fry but, because he's steeled himself to electric shocks, he uses *The Chair* to escape to another plane of existence, and is able to possess any body he requires to continue his most important work. He can also drag people into extraordinary electronic dream landscapes before killing his prey.

The denouement is somewhat inconclusive - aren't they always? - but Craven is a master of the

one-off scare as well as the gradual shift in atmosphere, so all is not lost. While *Shocker* is not as gutsy as *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and Pinker does not have Freddy Krueger's yuck appeal, the movie does have Craven's indelible touch, a bonfire of good effects which often go over the top, and all the requisite gore to bring it into Jason and Michael Myers territory.

***FEAR US PREVIEW**



Lab experiments go horribly wrong in *Regenerator*

REGENERATOR

Starring: Gene Le Brock, Catherine Baranov, Harry Cason, David Wicker, Stephen Brown, Jason Arnold
Director: G L Eastman
Distributor: Colourbox
Cert: 18, 92 mins

Dr Peter Houseman (Gene Le Brock) is the most gifted scientist in the American University that provides the central location for this movie. For years he has benefited from massive funding, although exactly what he does is shrouded in mystery – 'You don't ask a genius how he spends his money.' His bubble bursts when the research commission clamps down and refuses to provide any more cash until the nature of his experiments is documented.

Houseman is working on Burnette's theory of 'the genetic code of life', one which states that correctly stimulated cells will automatically reproduce to replace those that die. Thus, an animal with this code will never die. The commission dismisses the theory and closes down his experiments when he admits to using human foetuses as part of his research.

Determined to prove them wrong – particularly one of their number, romantic interest Sally Donnelly (Catherine Baranov) – Houseman injects himself with a radioactive serum containing the code. It doesn't work as he

expects (surprise!) and his body ages and decays. He also experiences black-outs during which he metamorphoses into a super-strong psychotic zombie. The only way to reverse the process is to repeat the experiment (?) to find what went wrong – but will it be too late to stop the 'nightmare from the past'?

Mad scientists are few and far between these days but *Regenerator* digs them up, using unlikely experiments, dragging footsteps and savage grunts for some Karloff-like scenes, occasionally with authentic ham acting. The plot isn't quite so outdated but it has more than its fair share of predictable events, the worst being the results of Houseman's self-injection – he had to become some sort of crazed monster. However obvious, film editor Kathleen Stratton has some difficulties in telling the story, some scenes are dreadfully long-winded and others cut so brief they leave the viewer somewhat bewildered.

Regenerator is rather like *Frankenstein*, *Jekyll and Hyde* and *The Incredible Hulk* all rolled into one, taking elements of each but watering down the recipe to a limp Eighties zombie-horror mass. It does have its amusing moments, however, and though you may have to wade through some dross, it's fine for a sedate winter's evening.
 Warren Lapworth



THE STICK

Starring Greg Latter, Sean Taylor, Frantz Dobrowsky, James Whyte, Nicky Rebelo, Gys De Villiers, Frank Opperman, Dickson Malele, Winston Ntshona
Director Darrell Roodt
Distributor Parkfield Pictures
Cert 15

An embarrassing military situation, troops of a surprisingly anonymous (South African?) army are being wiped out by black natives. The only survivor struggles back to base in extreme mental and physical distress. He tells of a group of ghostly-faced figures attacking under the cover of night, and picking off the soldiers one-by-one. The army divides into sticks, a slang military term for a small infantry detachment, and the area is scoured to eliminate the natives.

The film follows the path taken by an eight-man stick as they cross the border for Operation Zebra and is narrated by one of their number, Cooper (Greg Latter). They discover a village by night and witness a ritualistic dance, led by a witch doctor, mocking the burning corpses of four soldiers. At dawn, the stick attacks. The witch doctor appears with due mystery and Mkhonto, a black tracker and guide, is ordered to shoot him. He refuses and, apparently under the doctor's influence, is killed before he can shoot the lieutenant. Cooper shoots the witch doctor as he walks away but this appears to cure the stick. The men are gradually killed off, by various gruesome means, and the skull-faced natives make their dramatic appearance to seal the soldiers' doom.

From what can be deduced from this movie, which is at pains to keep the viewer informed, it takes place in a Bush war, although the actors' voices, making liberal use of the word 'fuck', imply a South African setting. Certainly you're given enough lingering views of dusty plains and barren horizons as the stick trudges along in single file—such scenes portray the boredom of trekking much too successfully for the viewers' own good.

However, the horrific realities of combat and the terror of an unstoppable curse, are portrayed with a monotonous narration reminiscent of a sedate documentary, interrupted by Raitch-style mindless killing. Sympathy for our 'heroes' is non-existent and you long for the war to end so that the film will. For the viewer, sticking with low-budget shock has greater rewards than this.

Warren Lapworth



"Well f---, man"

THE EDGE OF TERROR

Starring Meg Foster, Wings Hauser, David McCallum, Steve Railsback, Robert Morley, John Michaelis
Director Nico Mastorakis
Distributor Channel 5
Cert 15, 95 mins

Leading character Sam Anderson (Meg Foster) is the sort of waster whose work itself could appear in **FEAR**. She produces murder mysteries and begins her latest novel in a remote Greek town, free from all distractions.

Not for long, of course. Her landlord, Elos (Robert Morley), meets his untimely demise when he dismisses Phil the handyman (Wings Hauser). Sam sees the night burial through the mist, then ventures outdoors to investigate and discovers the body. Phil spends the rest of the film pursuing her all around the house and its gardens, intent on saying hello to a razor-sharp sickle, and she tries desperately to find help and to escape (she fails, naturally).

It's a great shame that

consistent effort wasn't applied throughout *The Edge of Fear* as the first third of the film is quite entertaining. The exotic locations and Robert Morley's highly amusing, but unfortunately brief, performance put one in mind of an Agatha Christie adaptation. Once the murder is committed and the body discovered, however, the whole thing degenerates into a very average one-on-one stalk 'n' slash, albeit in an unusual environment—nights are remarkably long and weather alternates between high winds and ground mist within minutes.

Wings Hauser gives the least convincing performance of all, his many mindless attacks are not in the least threatening, but Meg Foster has little problem being the distressed heroine—panicking, screaming and dashing around hardly demand Oscar-winning skills.

This is terror in as much as it has a few mildly worrying scenes (rather than the numerous scary ones which I'm sure were intended) but it's more likely to have you resting back in your



seat, twiddling your thumbs, than on the edge of it.

Warren Lapworth

FEAR Jan 1990

AMSTER-DAMNED

Starring: Huub Stapel, Monique Van De Ven, Serge-Henri Valcke, Hidde Maas, Wim Zomer
Director: Dick Maas
Distributor: Vestron
Cert 18, 113 mins

Behind the appallingly dubbed soundtrack lies a cool, thiftily executed, if not particularly elegant thriller in which one good cop, Inspector Eric Visser (Stapel) plays tip-toe through the tulips with a vicious killer who likes to drag ordinary Dutch-speaking members of the public into Amsterdam's dirty canals.

The inspector quickly moves in on the Netherlands' foremost diving club and a nest full of suspects, including the manic depressive manager, a strangely behaved psychiatrist and a young woman who insists on popping out of the water at the oddest of



Transport is just as horrific in Amsterdamdamned as it is in London

moments.

All is, of course, not what it seems but, despite a staggering number of diverse killings, the finale is disappointing. Our serial murderer turns out to be somebody who isn't mentioned until the last ten minutes of the film and the curious explanation for his behaviour had us all rolling on the carpet.

I shouldn't, however, be too hard on director Dick Maas, whose fame until now has largely

been centred around a low budget horror called *The Left*. He may have cheated in the movie's last minutes but he's also provided more than an hour's worth of gripping entertainment with a gaggle of bizarre characters.

Just don't expect a whodunnit. Instead, look forward to a cunningly devised, stylishly executed and realistic police procedural plot which certainly took me by surprise
John Gilbert

HELLGATE

Starring: Ron Palillo, Abigail Wolkott, Carel Trichardt, Petrea Curran, Evan Klisser, Joanne Ward
Director: William A Levy
Distributor: New World Pictures
Cert 18, 92 mins

Nifty special effects from Image Animation, plus sex and violence, all recommend this movie to those who like their horror hot and meaty.

The production values aren't brilliant but I still can't believe what Messrs O'Rourke and Levy have managed to pack into an hour and a half of non-stop action. You got your sorcerers, your zombies, your high school kids under threat, your sexy young vamps and your graveyard.

Hellgate's storyline almost doesn't matter, which is fortunate because it's a real bummer. It all starts with the gang murder of young Josie (Wolkott) just outside the small mining town of Hellgate in the summer of 1957. Most of the inhabitants leave the town after the dirty deed, but the girl's father, Lucas (Trichardt), stays on, determined to preserve the town as a shrine to his daughter.

One day he comes into possession of a crystal found buried in an old mine. He discovers that it can resurrect the dead or turn beauty into ugliness, and he decides to use its power to resurrect his daughter and have revenge on humanity for her death.

Josie lures unsuspecting town visitors to their deaths and her father repopulates the area with the undead. All is working well until Matt (Palillo) and his college

buddies arrive for the summer vacation. Josie tries to seduce him, her father tries to kill him and, eventually, he realises that something evil is lurking in the town.

Yep, it's not exactly the most enthralling concept, the undead

look a bit unreal, and the town looks like a stack of cans, but the director's swift cuts from one effects sequence to another turn what could have been a pile of bones on a bonfire into a slightly worse than average schlock flick
John Gilbert

Damn these tight collars... *Hellgate*



THE HOUSE OF USHER

Starring: Oliver Reed, Donald Pleasence, Romy Windsor
Director: Alan Birkinshaw

BURIED ALIVE

Starring: Robert Vaughn, Donald Pleasence, Karen Witter, John Carradine, Nia Long, Ginger Allen
Director: Gerard Kikoine

THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

Starring: Frank Stallone, Brenda Vaccaro, Herbert Lom, Christine Launde, Michelle Hooey
Director: Alan Birkinshaw

John Gilbert takes a look at the new Edgar Allan Poe movies due to hit British cinemas in a big way.

It is with apprehension that I approach these new versions - I refrain from calling them remakes - of some cream Edgar Allan Poe stories; but the enthusiasm for *Buried Alive*, *Masque of the Red Death* and *Fall of The House of Usher* by their respective casts, crews and American production company, 21st Century, leads me to conclude that the master's work is safe.

Last month we visited the set of another version of *The Masque of the Red Death*, starring Patrick Macnee. Both are superficially similar in content and storyline, though neither stuck to Poe's vision, or in the case of the 21st Century film, the character



Horrible Ollie Reed in *The House of Usher*

Like the company's Robert Englund vehicle, *Phantom of the Opera*, this film is set in the present and begins with a young woman, Rebecca Stephens (Hoey), driving through the Austrian mountains with a copy of the unabridged works of Mr Poe by her side.

She is on her way to a masked ball, being thrown by a wealthy industrialist called Ludwig (Lorn), which takes place in a castle built by his namesake, the Mad King of Bavaria. Rebecca is, however, not the innocent she seems, but a photographer for Snoop

magazine. She's spotted by an old flame, Max (Foland), who is attending the gala with an ageing actress lover.

Max introduces her to The Duke (Stallone) and his mistress Katrina (Davidson), before Ludwig enters the ballroom and declares the Masque of the Red Death open. He disappears in a puff of smoke and on the wings of a scream which comes from the depths of the castle.

The guests investigate, and soon come to believe that Ludwig is playing a game of death, search and destroy within a castle

secured by time-locked doors. The finale, a big battle between good and evil, will take place when those doors open at 8:00 am the following morning.

In a similar way, *Burned Alive*, called from the Poe story *The Premature Burial*, has a contemporary setting. Again we start with the pretty young thing, a teacher called Janet Pendelton (Witter) who is searching for Ravenscroft, a correctional school for girls. Meanwhile a young escapee from the institution is trying to drag to a fate unknown by a mysterious shadow.

Janet eventually arrives at the school and is given a guided tour by the head of Ravenscroft, Gary (Vaughn). She initially thinks she's going to enjoy life there but begins to hear voices and experience hallucinations of being buried alive while the strange disappearances at the school continue. Someone at Ravenscroft obviously has a hang-up about being kept in confined spaces, as most of the victims of the mysterious shadow are buried alive. Janet soon discovers who it is, to her cost.

The cost of insanity links *Burned Alive* with *The House of Usher*, a film which ominously leaves out the 'Fall of' and again takes place in the present.

It tells the tale of Molly McNulty (Windsor) who is involved in a car

crash with her fiancée Ryan Usher (Swart) while they are on the way to his uncle Rodenck's (Reed's) estate. She soon learns that her fiancée is dead, and Rodenck rapes her to ensure the continuance of the Usher line.

Enter Donald Pleasance as the horribly disfigured Walter Usher, Rodenck's mentally ill older brother. Locked up for his own, and others', good, he is set free by Molly and, in the movie that follows, the infamous house burns to the ground.

The House of Usher is probably the movie in this crop which most closely resembles the original Poe stories. The directors and writers of this series of revivals have used contemporary settings perhaps to woo a more mainstream audience than would view a Gothic adventure. To some extent, the powerful plotlines created by Poe have been watered down, but fans of the author's work will be pleased to hear that the crew involved in filming are also aficionados and each movie has the very definite Gothic atmosphere prevalent in many of the early Hammer films and Roger Corman's original low budget, but lavish, movies.

Castle Pictures have this 21st Century package for release in the UK sometime next year, so it certainly looks as if the Gothic mode of horror will make a comeback in a big way.

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 "Waxwork"
 "She's out of Control"

JAMES DOUGHTON
 "Spies like Us"
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 "Hamburger Hill"
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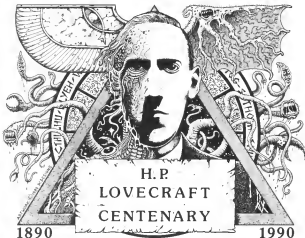
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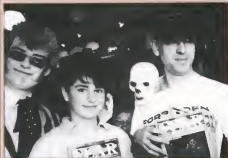
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THANKS FOR THE TREATS

Dear FEAR

I would be grateful if you could extend my thanks to all the good people at Palace Video, Carlton Books, Guild Film Distribution, Pan Books, Titan Books, Futura and JAC for helping to make our recent Halloween weekend in Cambridge front-page news for the local newspapers!

Thanks also to yourself and Franco for providing copies of the Halloween issue of **FEAR** as truck-on-treat prizes. The photo shows me – as 'monster of ceremonies' – as Beetlejuice pressing a copy onto a thrilled customer.

Thanks again.

Jon Harrison, General Manager, Forbidden Planet Ltd, London

THE DAMNATION GAME... AGAIN

Dear FEAR

So, the Clive Barker backlash has finally begun (and not before time). It seems to me that the man has, in fact, sold out. The very great potential shown in (some of) his early writing has not been fulfilled in later work. Barker (like James Herbert following the gory commercial flop of *Sepulchre* with the ever-so-safe *Haunted* – another Woman's Own sensationalism on the cards?) is pulling his punches for the sake of commercial success. His work is becoming tamer and safer.

I'm sure Mr Barker is aware (and has been made aware by his agents) that sales of his work will be jeopardised if he risks alienating mainstream readers with anything too graphic or disturbing. Books of *Blood* contained some very

explicit and subversive material. *The Damnation Game* did not shy away from challenging issues (ie drug addiction, infanticide). Then what do we get? The overlong and soft *Wavelength*, nothing too nasty to put off the housewives, and Barker hits the big time. Does anyone seriously think he is not going to capitalise on this? *Cabal* was lighter, but the violence was mainly offstage, 'quiet horror' (ie 'boiling horror') of the Charles L. Grant school. *The Great and Secret Show* I gave up on. Definitely suffering from Stephen Kingism (ie three times as long as it needs to be), and the start of a trilogy for God's sake! (*Wavelength 2* would do well, he's probably already written it).

His film work is going the same way. The subversive/explicit *Hellbreed* is followed by the safe *Nightbreed* ('With *Nightbreed*, Barker has shed away from the hardcore horror of his debut there is even talk of a 15 certificate' (i) *Fear 7*). With £11 million invested in the film, Barker is sure as hell not going to take any chances with anything that might upset anyone.

At a discussion at the world fantasy con last autumn he was asked to sum up in one word what his work was all about; he replied 'subversion'. Who is he trying to kid? Come on Clive, surely you've made enough money, isn't it about time the 'future of horror' actually gave us some of it?

Me. I'm sticking to *Skipper and Specter* (their Book of the Dead collection was superb: red, raw and dripping. Anyone who thinks Barker's books are tough should take a look at it). Ray Garton, Dan Simmons, David Schow, David Cronenberg (ironic, that he should appear in *Nightbreed*), Dario Argento and other writers and directors who aren't afraid to take risks.

Please print this. I am sure there are many others who feel the

same. A reply from the man himself would be appreciated. Chris Cowley, Caerphilly, Wales PS. How about some consistency in your movie reviews? How can you justify giving (rightly) negative/critical reviews of *Hellbound*, *The Abyss* etc and then positively recommend dreadful films like *Bud the Chud* and *The Vinyard*?

Points taken, Chris. We have duly approached Mr Barker for comment on the criticisms you have raised. [Ed] PS. And if you're really interested in 'subversion', then perhaps you can start by questioning your own macho assumptions about what 'housewives' do and don't like. [Deputy Ed]

TORY BIAS?

Dear FEAR

This is the first time I have written to a magazine, but I felt I had to write to congratulate you on the splendid job you are doing in promoting all aspects of the fantasy genre.

A quality magazine is needed in the forefront of the struggle against unfair censorship and artistic repression. I admit that a lot of horror films are not shiny, but most of us are discerning adults and do not need the likes of the Conservative party or Prince Charles telling us what we should watch. I feel that the attack on filmmaking by the censors is just part of an overall attack by the government to stifle creativity and imagination and, ultimately, individual thought, which is the real threat to the establishment – blindness in films and music. They have not succeeded, especially in the light of the thought-provoking films that have been made in recent years. Take, for instance, *Videochrome*, *Dead Ringers*, *The Fly* and the nipping yarns – *Frog Night*, *The Blob*, *Coal Dead II*, the *Hellraiser* films and so many others.

Keep up the good work. Dave Dillway (address not supplied)

We all have our right to free speech, even the Conservatives, although it does seem that the party in power always gets some special blame for repression.

You're slightly off our with your assertion that these people have failed in their attempts to interfere with so many good films over recent years. Every single one of the movies you mention has required cuts at some stage of the production process.

FEAR
ISSUE No. 14
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ENTERS THE FUNHOUSE

● **RICHARD LAYMON**, America's answer to Shaun Hutton and then some, talks about *Flesh*, *Resurrection* Dreams and his latest novel *Funhouse*.

● **RAY HARRYHAUSEN**, creator of historic fantasy film stop-motion effects, gives his views on the contemporary film industry, and discusses his model exhibition at London's Museum of the Moving Image and the films that made him world famous as a great effects innovator.

● **ROY DOTRICE**, of television's *Beauty and the Beast*, talks about his role as Father, the episodes he penned and exclusively reveals the truth behind rumours of a shock ending for the series.

● **FEAR GOES** down on the farm in Wales for a location report on *The Revenge of Billy the Kid*, a new independent horror/comedy movie starring – well, er – cow shit, actually.

● **J G BALLARD**, acclaimed science fiction genre veteran and author of such diverse books as *The Atrocity Exhibition*, *Memories of the Space Age* and *Empire of the Sun*, downs his pen to tell **FEAR** readers about his unearthly achievements.

● **NEIL GAIMAN**, progenitor of the *Sandman* and *Black Orchid* comicbooks, reveals his plans for comicdom, tells how he entered the medium's hallowed halls and discusses his first humorous novel with coauthor Terry Pratchett.

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